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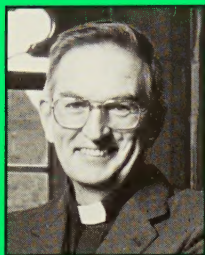
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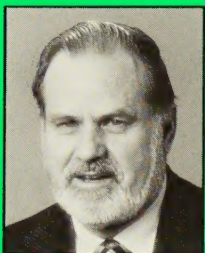




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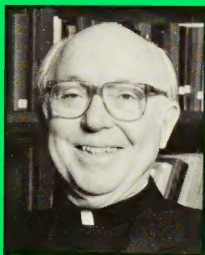
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The editors of HUMAN DEVELOPMENT are pleased to consider for publication articles relating to the ongoing work of those involved in helping other people through religious leadership and formation, spiritual direction, education, and counseling.

Manuscripts should be submitted to the Executive Editor, Linda Amadeo, either (1) as e-mail attachments in any Windows-based (not Macintosh) word-processing program from 2000 or earlier or (2) by mail (see addresses below). Unaccepted mailed manuscripts will not be returned unless submitted with a stamped, self-addressed return envelope.

Manuscripts are received with the understanding that they have not been previously published and are not currently under consideration elsewhere. Feature articles should be limited to 4,500 words (15 double-spaced pages), with no more than 6 recommended readings; filler items of between 500 and 1,000 words will be considered. All accepted material is subject to editing.

Authors are responsible for the completeness and accuracy of proper names in both text and bibliography. Acknowledgments must be given when substantial material is quoted from other publications. Provide author name(s), title of article, title of journal or book, volume number, page(s), month and year, and publisher's permission to use material.

Letters are welcome and will be published as space permits and at the discretion of the editors. Such communications should not exceed 600 words and are subject to editing.

Book reviews (maximum length: 600 words) should be sent to the Book Review Editor, Sr. Brenda Hermann, M.S.B.T., A.C.S.W., at [bhermann5@comcast.net](mailto:bhermann5@comcast.net). Books for review should be sent to Sister Hermann at 11529 February Circle, #303, Silver Spring, MD 20904.

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# EDITOR'S PAGE

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## A TIME OF TRANSITION

**I**n *Finders Keepers: Selected Prose, 1971–2001*, Seamus Heaney writes: “Hope, according to [Vaclav] Havel, is different from optimism. It is a state of the soul rather than a response to the evidence. It is not the expectation that things will turn out successfully but the conviction that something is worth working for, however it turns out. Its deepest roots are in the transcendental, beyond the horizon.”

Almost twenty-five years ago, Father James J. Gill started *HUMAN DEVELOPMENT* with the conviction that it was worth working for, no matter how it turned out. He believed that church leaders needed a journal that brought together the best of modern social science, theology, and spirituality in order to do their ministry in the new age ushered in by the Second Vatican Council. He had a dream, paid attention to it, and came to the conclusion that God was its inspirer. Its deepest roots were, he believed, in God. He began *HUMAN DEVELOPMENT* with the hope inspired by God and with little else but the help of people like Linda Amadeo, who shared his hope. Jim’s dream and God’s meshed well enough for the journal to thrive and to influence the lives of countless bishops, priests, and religious in its short history. In the following pages you will read testimonies from some of them, thanking Jim Gill for having the wisdom to pay attention to his dream, for having the courage to hope, in Havel’s sense, and for launching this journal, which has done so much for the church he loves.

It is a great honor to have been asked to take Jim Gill’s place as editor-in-chief. I first met Jim when, in 1969, I joined the faculty at Weston Jesuit School of Theology as a relatively newly minted clinical psychologist, hired to teach pastoral theology and to counsel students preparing for ministry in the church. I asked Jim to be my supervisor, and he gladly

took on that task and fulfilled it with the kind of insight, humor, and honesty celebrated in the pages to follow. I recall still how he gently yet cleanly enabled me to see my own self-righteousness instead of my client’s pain by using an analogy that at first seemed far afield. Suddenly, like David confronted by Nathan’s parable, I realized that I was “the man” in need of contrition and self-evaluation. Jim did this without a tinge of accusation or blame, but in a way that showed me myself and helped me to repent and to grow. It was a model of supervisory skill and a reflection of the way God acts when God shows us our sins and faults. It happened over thirty years ago, but I still remember the lesson and have tried to emulate Jim in my own supervisory efforts with spiritual directors. It is indeed an honor to try to walk in his shoes as the new editor of this journal.

As Jim announced in the last issue, Regis University has taken over the publisher’s role from the Jesuit Educational Center for Human Development. It is the mark of a great person to be able to create an institution that serves others and then to pass that institution on to other hands so that it can continue its work. Jim has wanted to do the latter for some time. He has had strong ties of friendship and of service with Regis University for as long as *HUMAN DEVELOPMENT* has existed, and on more than one occasion he has wanted to bring his work to Denver and to Regis University. For various reasons, the circumstances were not ripe earlier. But now the eagerness of Regis University to become the publisher and Jim’s desire to hand it on have meshed. With this issue, Jim has passed on not only the position of editor-in-chief but also the task of publishing. On the back cover you will begin to become acquainted with this unique Jesuit university.

Over the course of this year, we will be looking at how we can expand the readership of *HUMAN DEVELOPMENT* to include lay leaders and lay ministers in the church, as well as others interested in the integration of social science research with theology

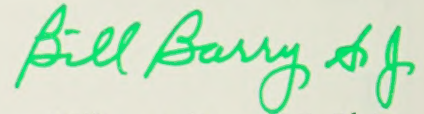


and spirituality for full human development. This expansion has been one of Jim Gill's dreams, as he realizes how crucial the role of the laity has become for the life of the church in our modern world. On the inside back cover of this issue, you will find an "Invitation to Authors" that includes this expanded mission. This year we will also be considering how the journal's mission might be enhanced by a new design for its covers and interior. On behalf of all those involved in the production of HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, I want to express gratitude to Regis University, and especially to its president, Reverend Michael J. Sheeran, S.J., for assuming the task of publishing our journal.

Linda Amadeo, the executive editor of HUMAN DEVELOPMENT since its inception, will continue to oversee the production of the journal from her office in Madison, Connecticut. Without her able and dedicated work throughout the years, the dream for HUMAN DEVELOPMENT could not have been fulfilled.

All manuscripts and letters should be addressed to her office, as indicated on the masthead. From now on, all books for review should be sent to Sister Brenda Hermann, M.S.B.T., A.C.S.W., who has graciously agreed to serve as our book review editor. She will make decisions on what titles should be reviewed and will contact reviewers. I will handle the duties of editor-in-chief from my office at Campion Center, 319 Concord Road, Weston, MA 02493-1398.

As I begin my tenure, I am aware of the large shoes I have to fill, and I will try to fill them in the same spirit of hope that drove Jim Gill to begin the journal. I know that I can count on your prayers, and that Jim can count on them too as he lives with the effects of his cancer.

A handwritten signature in green ink that reads "Bill Barry S.J." with a stylized flourish at the end.

William A. Barry, S.J., Ph.D.  
Editor-in-Chief

## Helping Enhances Longevity

**R**esearchers at the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research report that helping others can be beneficial to one's health, according to an "In Brief" item in *Monitor on Psychology* (February 2003, p. 17). In a study of 423 older couples over a five-year period, the researchers found that those who reported having given no help or emotional support to another were more than twice as likely to die within that period as were

those who helped others. These results held up even after the researchers made allowances for physical and mental health, health satisfaction, age, income, and education. Stephanie Brown, Ph.D., the lead investigator, notes that "this may be the first study to compare giving and receiving with mortality as an outcome, so future research is needed to replicate and extend these findings."



# A Tribute to James J. Gill, S.J., M.D.

**PETER-HANS KOLVENBACH, S.J.  
SUPERIOR GENERAL**

*Dear Father Gill:*

As you come to the end of twenty-three years as founding editor-in-chief of *HUMAN DEVELOPMENT*, I want to thank you for your many contributions to the church at large and to the Society of Jesus in particular. You have been tireless in your willingness to use your considerable talents for the good of the church and the Society. Most of the miles you have flown over the past thirty years have been in the service of the church and the Society in various lands. I leave it to others to speak of your contributions, through workshops and consultations and the journal *HUMAN DEVELOPMENT*, to various dioceses and bishops and religious congregations and superiors throughout the world.

You have also made many trips throughout the world to conduct workshops and consultations in various provinces of the Society of Jesus. The Society is grateful for the help you have given to your brothers in Christ. However, I want to highlight your contributions to the smooth working of the central government of the Society during the years when Father Pedro Arrupe was Superior General. When Father Arrupe wanted to develop better ways to work together with

provincials around the world, he consulted you, and you helped to design the colloquium for new provincials that was the prototype of the one still used today. Through these colloquia, Father Arrupe and I have become friends in the Lord with new provincials. In addition, you facilitated some of the earliest of such colloquia. At the Thirty-Second General Congregation, Father Arrupe told Father Vincent O'Keefe that he had personally met almost all of the delegates. This new state of affairs in the Society was due in no small part to your suggestions on how to foster a more interpersonal style of government, as well as to Father Arrupe's own charismatic style. The two of you worked well together. Father Arrupe had great affection for you and confidence in your wisdom, and he consulted you often in matters of formation and governance in the Society. It seemed, at times, as though you had a permanent guest room at the Curia.

Father Gill, I am grateful to you. In the name of the Society of Jesus, I am happy to express this gratitude in this public way. I assure you of my prayers and of those of your brother Jesuits as you face the effects of your long illness.

With prayerful best wishes, I am,

Sincerely in our Lord,

*Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J.  
Superior General*



**JOHN S. CUMMINS, D.D.**  
**BISHOP OF OAKLAND**

I would describe my relationship with Father Jim Gill as both personal and professional. Perhaps that comes from the San Francisco Bay Area atmosphere in which we both grew up. It also could find its basis in our common priestly vocations. The two qualities, however, are intertwined.

As in our time, Father Gill underwent the moderate rigors of theological training in the 1950s. He went on from there to the discipline of medicine, with a specialty in psychiatry. He undertook the latter in the perspective outlined by the Second Vatican Council of the deep respect that must be given to the human sciences. He learned his field well, illustrating the passionate observation of Etienne Gilson that piety is no substitute for skill and discipline.

It was through this comprehension that he could place the insights of psychiatry in relation to religious practice and moral context. For the United States church, he could enjoy the classification of pioneer in that he related mental and emotional health and growth to spirituality, recalling the probing of the church through the centuries on the relation of nature and grace.

Father Jim imbibed the direction of Saint Ignatius "to serve the one Lord as well as the Church's spouse." He did this with another Ignatian inheritance. This touched on the early orientation of the Jesuit mission in education. Therefore, beyond the exercise of therapy, Father Jim Gill established this magazine, *HUMAN DEVELOPMENT*. Well before the flames of crisis appeared, he moved thoughtfully to establish the Christian Institute for the Study of Human Sexuality. He directed this Institute to serve in particular those in the church with formation and personnel responsibilities, whether in religious communities or in dioceses.

Father Gill fell into that category of the extraordinary American priests in each generation—much like Monsignor George Higgins, who went to his reward this past year.

These men made their learning accessible and accommodating, responding quickly and graciously to those who sought their insights. In this particular manner, Father Jim Gill served the bishops of this country and beyond. Again, he modeled the fruitful issue from the Second Vatican Council of the healthy relationship between bishops and religious communities. Father Gill was constantly available for workshops and seminars. I recall in particular his presentation to the gathering of United States bishops at the University of Santa Clara eight years ago. In addition

to presenting his wholesome understanding of human growth, he responded to a friendly question from one of the bishops as to how he, Father Gill himself, managed to find beautiful and healthy experiences in the midst of a demanding schedule. His response was congenial, gracious, and wise.

In tribute to one of our western Jesuits who served the church locally and on almost every other continent as well, Archbishop John Quinn of San Francisco remarked, "The Society of Jesus is the gift of the heart of Jesus to the Church." The life and the work of Father Jim Gill find easy inclusion under that rubric.

**LINDA AMADEO, R.N., M.S.**  
**EXECUTIVE EDITOR**

In a recent public television broadcast, Itzak Perlman was conducting a group of his students. His patience and pride in each of them was evident. Each of them was incredibly talented, and so proud to be there as a student of a world-class expert. None of them had yet achieved the ability of the teacher. And then the master picked up his violin and began to play. The music brought tears to my eyes; few are the true virtuosos we encounter in a lifetime.

As I write my tribute to Jim Gill, I realize, again, that he too is a master. His understanding of humanity is profound. His ability to teach, his patience, his love for each one he meets are qualities admired by all who know him.

I remember meeting Doctor James J. Gill, S.J., M.D., in the autumn of 1964, when he was a first-year psychiatric resident at the prestigious Institute of Living, the third-oldest psychiatric hospital in the United States. Twelve of us student nurses from the local Catholic hospital came to the Institute to learn in three months what we could about mental illness, and the effects it has on patient, family, and society. In those days, the church looked with suspicion at psychiatry, and Dr. Gill, along with his mentor, Dr. Francis Braceland, pioneered in developing the church's understanding of psychiatric teachings.

Dr. Gill was cheerful, friendly, warm, kind, accepting. He put a human face on the suffering we observed. His intellectual brilliance, coupled with a deep sense of humility, made him a quick favorite. We looked forward to his case studies and discussions. It was evident early on that this man had a profound love of God, the Jesuit order, the church, and the daily Eucharist he celebrated, which we felt privileged to attend. He spoke to us about nursing as a ministry, a way of serving God.



Jim invited me to work for him, to run his office once I graduated. While still a student, I could research topics for talks he was invited to give in an ever-widening circle. It was an important moment in my life and an honor. There was something unusual about this man. He was like no other priest I had ever met. He was not just personable and charming and fun to be around; he also had a great compassion for the sick and infirm.

But this man, James J. Gill, not only had compassion and empathy. He had boundless energy, creativity, enthusiasm, imagination, and a great sense of humor. He took time to describe autumn leaves dancing down a street or fireflies blinking a welcome to a warm summer evening. Jim took initiatives. He made things happen. Proactive rather than reactive, he was called a prophet by some. Long before the Second Vatican Council, he was saying that the glory of God is a person fully alive. He modeled this and patiently challenged us to do the same. He read theology, medical books and journals, newspapers (especially the *New York Times*), and books of fiction and nonfiction; listened to music of all kinds; enjoyed Broadway plays, opera (owing to his self-proclaimed Italian soul), and concerts; read poetry out loud; and took time to recreate himself by contemplative prayer, walking in a park, visiting a museum, or swimming in a pool. His *forté*, however, was his gift of presence—his ability to listen, to hear what the heart is saying, and to accept each person he meets, president or pauper, with a welcoming, nonjudgmental, childlike love.

As I reflect on my shared ministry with Jim, I am proud, and deeply honored that I could be part of his brilliant career. We worked very hard and had fun. I think of those concluding words of Robert Frost's poem "The Road Not Taken," about "the road less traveled by" whose choice "made all the difference."

Jim Gill's less-traveled road, which I chose to follow, has brought me, along with a team of experts, to parts of the world that had previously existed for me only in travel books. Yet there I was, sharing his ministry: helping him for twenty-three years to edit a new journal, *HUMAN DEVELOPMENT*; conducting workshops for superiors, religious, and clergy on a variety of topics, all having to do with psychosexual growth to maturity, in San Francisco, Rome (at the "Greg"), New York, Seattle, India, Thailand, Melbourne, Dublin, Hong Kong, Japan, Nairobi, Peru, and even Kathmandu, to name a few of the places our team traveled. Because of him, I met Mother Teresa and was invited with Jim to work for her sisters in Calcutta.

Here in the states, Jim accepted an invitation to collaborate in the research of Dr. Meyer Friedman—

the doctor who, with Dr. Ray Rosenman, another cardiologist, introduced the term "Type A Behavior" (which Friedman also called "hurry sickness") into the medical vocabulary. The research was designed to prevent subsequent heart attacks by teaching patients to deal with stress in a healthy way. We all benefited from Jim's knowledge as he incorporated what he learned from this research into talks and articles for religious and clergy worldwide. Long before the recent crisis in the American church, Jim had the foresight to begin the Christian Institute for the Study of Human Sexuality, an adult-education model, much appreciated by those who attended its month-long programs.

Jim lives a life of love. His desire has been to teach each of us about God and the gift of each day, and to challenge us to become all that we can be. While working at Harvard University, he became a disciple of Erik Erikson and Abraham Maslow. Their insights were part of Jim's presentations. His words, "Enjoy it," whenever we were about to speak to a group, and especially his motto "Always leave room for improvement," have given me the confidence and *élan* to keep on with this ministry. For many, Jim has been an *Anam Cara*—a "soul friend." Jim has loved his family and friends, and has used the gifts given to him by God, to the fullest.

Because Jim Gill took the road less traveled, he has made a difference in the lives of all who have had the opportunity to sit at his feet, as Perlman's musicians sat at the feet of their own great teacher. Traveling the road for the past couple of years has been painful for him, as well as for those of us who love him. It has been a way of the cross for this Jesuit priest, whose main goal in life was to imitate Jesus. What a legacy of love, patience, understanding, and courage he, like Jesus, leaves us. And he prays for those of us who are on that less-traveled road. The prayer of Cardinal Newman is also the prayer of Father Gill:

May the Lord keep you all the day long,  
Till the shadows lengthen and the evening comes,  
And the busy world is hushed and the fever of life is  
over  
And our work on Earth is done.  
Then in His mercy may He grant us a safe lodging  
and a holy rest  
And peace at last.

**LOUGLAN SOFIELD, S.T., M.A.**  
**SENIOR EDITOR**

Many years ago, in an interview for *Medical Insight* entitled "Despondency: Why We See It in



Priests," James Gill wisely observed that priests are frequently affirmed only for what they do. As a result, they respond by increasing or accumulating more of the tasks for which they are affirmed. This behavior leads to despondent, workaholic priests. Jim's conclusion was that priests should be affirmed for who they are, not just what they accomplish.

Therefore, I address the person of James Gill rather than his accomplishments. Many readers are aware of Jim's numerous accomplishments, such as his initiation of HUMAN DEVELOPMENT and the Christian Institute for the Study of Human Sexuality (CISHS). Both of those endeavors arose from his recognition of the need for resources to foster a deeper understanding of human psychosexual growth to maturity. Many have experienced his mesmerizing and insightful presence as a presenter. Those fortunate enough to know Jim personally are aware of the unique qualities that make him such a loved person as well as an effective, dedicated minister.

I first encountered Jim Gill when I was a newly appointed formation director and asked him for any insights he could share to help me as a new director. Jim simply suggested two principles: do not presume you have to teach people how to pray, and create a program in which people feel free to fail. These two principles describe Jim.

The quality that most characterizes Jim is his deep faith. A couple of decades ago, there was debate in the church about the validity of the "hyphenated priest." As a priest-psychiatrist, Jim witnesses the integration of his priesthood and psychiatric career. He has a profound love for his priesthood and for the Eucharist. Regardless of where in the world we were working or what time we arrived in a remote area of a foreign country, Jim would offer mass—celebrated not in a perfunctory manner but with evidence of his deep faith and love for the Eucharist, and including into the liturgy all the people of that area. At any time of crisis, Jim's first impulse is to turn to God in prayer for wisdom and fortitude.

Emanating from that deep faith is Jim's founding of projects such as HUMAN DEVELOPMENT and CISHS. The risk that these endeavors could succeed or fail was inconsequential once Jim was convinced that they were what God was calling him to do.

In a document on evangelization, Pope Paul VI stated, "People don't listen to teachers. They listen to witnesses, and when they do listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses." Far more profound than Jim's outstanding skill as a teacher is the fact that he lives what he both preaches and teaches. God has blessed Jim with many gifts; space limits me to highlighting only a few.

Jim is the penultimate listener. He is completely

present to anyone who engages him in discussion. Individuals leave an encounter with Jim feeling affirmed and special. I have seen people approach Jim, saying that they met him many years earlier. Without a pause, and to their amazement, Jim will begin to inquire about issues they discussed with him, as though it had occurred only yesterday.

God has blessed Jim with a gift of discerning. He possesses an uncanny ability to discern what people need. He can read the hearts of individuals, even those aspects that may be hidden.

Jim epitomizes generosity. He has infinite time and patience for anyone. In particular, this is true for religious leaders who consult him regarding those in their care who are suffering and in pain. Jim is a healer who, with great compassion and tenderness, shares his wisdom.

Jim is an affirmer. I share a personal example. As a young brother, I was assigned to care for the furnaces at our seminary. Later I was assigned to minister in a settlement house. When I met Jim, he not only affirmed gifts he saw in me but also generously and patiently provided the personal support and encouragement to help me develop those gifts. Because of his affirmation, support, and encouragement, my engagement in ministry over the years has been enriched.

## **DONNA MARKHAM, O.P., Ph.D.**

### **EDITORIAL BOARD**

Back in the 1970s, when a new wave of religious and clergy were given encouragement to engage in graduate studies in medicine and in the behavioral sciences, Jim Gill, S.J., M.D., stood as a giant among mentors for many of us. We recall all too well that during the tumultuous times following Vatican Council II, many who went into various graduate programs left priesthood and religious life. Clearly, the reasons were myriad. For those of us who remained, there were few moments not punctuated by soul-searching and persistent questioning about why it was that we were staying in religious life. It was a difficult historical period in which to be studying in the field of the behavioral sciences. As some of us entered graduate programs in psychology—especially more psychoanalytically-oriented programs—our religious commitment, already under self-scrutiny, was additionally challenged by professors and supervisors, to whom we were frequently objects of curiosity. It seemed to some more senior practitioners that it was just a matter of time before a priest or religious would "move beyond" their religious commitment and "fully embrace" the life of a clinical psychologist or psychiatrist.



It was in the midst of this period that Jim's extraordinary commitment as a Jesuit and as a psychiatrist quietly witnessed to my generation of religious clinicians that it was indeed quite possible to be both a deeply committed religious and an excellent clinician. We saw no dichotomy in Jim. His expertise was infused with the conviction that the human story was sacred; that the promise of healing and reconciliation happened in the therapy room, just as it occurred in the holy moments of sacrament; that God's care took human form through the words and actions of the faithful practitioner; that being a clinician and a religious made each aspect of one's life more profound and permeated with wonder. Jim lived this truth.

My first encounter with Jim occurred at a gather-

ing of formation directors, where he was giving a presentation and I was a "twentysomething" psychologist doing psychological screening of applicants. I had known of him and been awed by his stature. What impressed me so, upon meeting him in person, was that he was as interested in my work and as affirming of me as if I were a Harvard colleague. Despite his stature, Jim has always struck me as a strong but incredibly humble man.

So this is a moment to express profound gratitude for the groundbreaking, for the mentoring and the affirmation of subsequent generations of religious psychologists and psychiatrists, and for the immense contribution Jim has offered to the church through his kind and courageous commitment as a true companion of Jesus, the healer.

## Does Prayer Work?

**W**riting in this issue of *HUMAN DEVELOPMENT*, Cheryl France, S.C., M.D., answers the above question in the affirmative, suggesting that prayer can affect the limbic system. In a recent article titled "Does Prayer Work?" in *O, The Oprah Magazine* (September 2002), Sara Davidson reported on the research of Elisabeth Targ, M.D., regarding the effects of prayer in people who are at a distance from and unknown to those who pray for them. Dr. Targ asked persons from different spiritual traditions who were considered experts in prayer to join her carefully controlled and scientifically rigorous studies.

In the first project, the participants were asked to pray for AIDS patients. Strange to say, none of the patients who were prayed for during the six-month trial period died, whereas 40 percent of the patients in the control group did. In a second study, no one died in either group, perhaps because of the greater effectiveness of the drugs by then in use—but those who were prayed for were six times less likely to suffer complications and illnesses than the patients in the control group.

Dr. Targ also led two studies funded by the National Institutes of Health: one on AIDS patients and the other

on people suffering from glioblastoma multiforme—a rare, aggressive brain tumor that is quickly fatal in most cases. In a strange twist of fate, Dr. Targ herself was diagnosed with glioblastoma multiforme after she began the latter study and passed away in July 2002.

This research raises a number of questions, not only for scientists but also for theologians. Many scientists question the rigor of the work done in this area by Dr. Targ and a number of other medical investigators. In her article, Davidson cited a group of Anglican scholars who say, "Prayer is a means for connecting with the sacred, not for controlling events." We can sympathize with this sentiment because we know that we cannot control God's actions. Yet in the Catholic tradition, prayer for others at a distance has always been encouraged and practiced. How it works is a good question for theological reflection. Davidson reported an interesting statistical finding: "A national survey in 1996 found that 82 percent of Americans believe in the healing power of prayer, and 75 percent of about 300 family practice doctors who were polled believe prayer can affect the outcome of illness."



# The Stresses of Leadership

*James J. Gill, S.J., M.D.*

*This article by James J. Gill, consulting editor of HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, was originally published in the journal's Spring 1980 issue.*

**H**ardly a newspaper, television program, magazine, or institutional bulletin board these days is without some reference to stress, a book on stress management, a stress clinic, or a stress-reduction workshop. The topic is mind-grabbing, appealing in some way to nearly everyone. And why shouldn't it be, in a world of missile-rattling superpowers, economic recession, monetary inflation, fuel shortages, poverty, famine, terrorism, street crime, and marital disasters?

Arnold A. Mitchell of the Stanford Research Institute has observed: "Stress is a major problem in the contemporary United States. It negatively affects the daily lives of scores of millions of Americans. It causes a bewildering array of physiological, psychological, and social malfunctions. On an economic level, the effects of stress probably cost the nation over \$100 billion annually. Moreover, available evidence suggests that stress-related maladies are on the rise."

Dr. Leon Warshaw, past deputy director of the Mayor's Office of Operations of the City of New York, has termed Mitchell's view, which might at first seem

somewhat exaggerated, a "gross understatement." He reminds us that there is no one living anywhere whose life is not affected continually by stress. It causes illness and accidents, and those who care about and must care for the victims are also stressed. "It affects personalities, modifying our perceptions, feelings, attitudes, and behavior. And it reaches beyond its immediate victims to affect the political, social and work organizations whose activities they direct and carry out. And these organizations, as living, functional entities, are also affected by stress: their growth and survival are very much related to their success in coping with stress," Warshaw explains.

Furthermore, it should be asserted that the whole world is filled with individuals under stress; collectively their distress has an impact upon the lives of all others within their societies, which in turn adds stress to the existence of people everywhere on our planet. But whence comes healing?

Those in leadership roles, particularly in the church and its religious congregations, are naturally in a position to observe the kinds of stress their people are experiencing at work, in their communities, and in their personal lives. The apostolic outcome of leaders' efforts, combined with those of their followers, depends in large measure upon the success they achieve in recognizing, appraising, and controlling the forces that



introduce crippling stress into their enterprise. The vitality and viability of their endeavors are continually at stake, and stress is an enemy quite capable of bringing the best-laid plans to failure, or even to disaster.

## THE CONCEPT OF STRESS

But as every warrior knows, in order to fight an enemy successfully, you need to understand that enemy. So what are we talking about when we speak of stress? We need some terms and concepts if we are to come to grips with this formidable, ubiquitous foe. Unfortunately, the word *stress* has come to be used in a vague and sloppy fashion during recent years—perhaps because, as Cornell University occupational health specialist Alan McLean has pointed out, the vast literature on the subject “stems from many and diverse disciplines, primarily psychiatry, clinical and social psychology, cultural anthropology, and occupational and internal medicine, with significant contributions from such widely different fields as behavioral toxicology and personnel management.” Each of these disciplines is concerned with what are generally termed “psychosocial stresses,” but communication across disciplinary lines is notoriously poor. If you read works in these various fields, you will find the same term used with different meanings, depending upon who is writing and the field in which he or she specializes.

Despite this confusion, we still have to rely on authoritative sources for our terminology. Perhaps a brief look at the history of the concept of stress might prove helpful.

Pioneer researcher and Nobel Prize winner Hans Selye, who first published his findings on the physiologic effects of stress in *Nature* (July 4, 1936), borrowed the term *stress* from the vocabulary of engineers and physicists. Scientists had long been using it to convey the notion of enough force being applied to an object or system to distort or deform it. Were we to adhere closely to this original meaning of the word, we would be prompted to consider psychologic, personal, and emotional stress as stemming from forces operating on a person from somewhere in the surrounding environment and affecting that person in ways that result in tension, strain, and even illness. But Selye's way of conceptualizing stress was quite different. He saw it as existing in the individual's body as a specific set of biological conditions that occur when an event or situation has an impact on the person and requires an adaptation of some sort.

## DISTRESS VERSUS EUSTRESS

Stress, according to Selye, is a nonspecific response of the body to any type of demand made upon it.

Calling it “nonspecific” simply indicates that the response pattern is always biochemically the same, regardless of the nature of the stressor. Bacteria, virus, heat, cold, physical injury, an interior emotional conflict, or a threat perceived as arising in one's exterior milieu—all would stimulate or provoke identically the same kind of physiologic response. In Selye's own words, “From the point of view of its stress-producing or stressor activity, it is immaterial whether the agent or situation we face is pleasant or unpleasant. . . . It is difficult to see how such essentially different things as cold, heat, drugs, hormones, sorrow and joy could provoke an identical biochemical reaction in the body. Nevertheless, this is the case.”

Recognizing that in human life not all stressful experiences are unpleasant or destructive, Selye selected additional terms to distinguish between a stress that is positive in its life consequences and one that is negative. He called the former eustress, the latter distress. Eustress is stress experienced by a person who is winning; there comes with it a sense of achievement, triumph, and exhilaration. A person who is losing knows distress. Disappointment, helplessness, desperation, insecurity, or inadequacy produce stress of the distress type.

## STRESSOR, STRESS REACTION, STRESS

Dr. Richard Lazarus is another major contributor to the field of research into stress and ways of coping with it. He too locates stress inside the person rather than in the environment. However, he emphasizes the important role played by cognition (i.e., thought, or perception) in the individual's stress response. Lazarus regards situations or events themselves as being neutral; they become stressful only when perceived or appraised negatively. Thus, for a stress response to occur, a person must become aware of an exterior or interior situation or demand that calls into question his or her ability to cope with it successfully and painlessly. Psychologists Robert Woolfolk and Frank Richardson, authors of the useful book *Stress, Sanity, and Survival*, have adopted Lazarus's understanding of the nature of stress. They define it as “a perception of threat or expectation of future discomfort that arouses, alerts, or otherwise activates the organism.”

In light of the formulations proposed by the behavioral scientists we have already considered, and for the sake of clarity and simplicity in our present discussion of stress, it would seem advisable to adopt the following three definitions: (1) The *stressor* is an event, situation, or condition that, perceived cognitively, produces a psychologic and biologic (or psychobiologic) reaction in the individual that is usually,



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## Leadership means insistence on movement, which is inseparable from change—and in whatever direction change moves, stress will soon accompany it

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but not necessarily, unpleasant and sometimes produces symptoms of physical or emotional illness. (2) The *stress reaction* is the response produced by the perceived stressor. It is often unhealthy (i.e., threatening to the person's total well-being), and includes affective (feeling, emotion, mood) as well as physiologic (especially hormonal) components. (3) *Stress* is simply the interior process that includes the stressor (event) as perceived, the stress reaction (response to the event), and whatever steps intervene between them.

Let's look at an uncomplicated example: A man who is waving a revolver suddenly throws open the office door and, with rage unmistakably driving him, moves menacingly toward the bishop, who is seated at his desk. The stressor? An enraged man brandishing a lethal weapon at close range. The stress reaction? Presumably, the fear experienced by the bishop. This includes the psychic experience of that specific unpleasant emotion, as well as the physiologic changes that accompany it (e.g., adrenaline secretion, increase in heart rate, elevation of blood pressure, stepped-up blood-cell production). And stress? The whole process, from perceiving the threat through feeling afraid and being physiologically prepared for "fight or flight."

### CHANGE, MOVEMENT, AND STRESS

Stress is related to leadership in an inevitable way. Moreover, because leaders, by the very nature

of their task, are attempting to influence others to strive willingly toward the achievement of the group's goals, stress will likely arise in the leader as well as in the individual members whenever a conflict develops in regard to needs, expectations, or goals. The very concept of leader implies guiding, conducting, directing, and preceding—one who facilitates progress and inspires the group to accomplish organizational goals. But all this means insistence on movement, which is inseparable from change. And in whatever direction change (even development or improvement) moves, stress will soon be there to accompany it.

It would be impossible, even if this article were encyclopedic in scope, to cite all the ways stress can occur as a result of the ordinary interactions between leaders (e.g., superiors, formation teams, pastors) and those whose lives and behavior they are trying to influence. Consider for a moment the typical manner in which a stress reaction occurs: A person in a given situation perceives something happening that constitutes a threat to his or her well-being (recall our example of the bishop confronted by the man with the gun). A painful emotional response (e.g., fear, anger), accompanied by a flooding of hormones and steroids (e.g., adrenaline and cortisol) into blood vessels, organs, and tissues, is automatic. Stated more simply, all that is required to trigger a stress response deep down inside is perception of some form of personal loss. So, for example, when a leader with authority calls on his or her followers to travel a road that demands sacrifice or to give up a familiar way of doing things, loss is perceived as imminent; hormones and emotions take over. If the leader should encounter resistance, and if his or her goal thus remains unaccomplished, the loss of power the leader senses may become a threat to his or her sense of worth, which in turn engenders stress: more emotion (anger? resentment? grief?), and hormones at high tide.

### SIGNS OF STRESS IN OURSELVES

At times a bit of anger, anxiety, or some other distressful emotion is bound to occur in everyone's life. So why are people becoming increasingly concerned about stress? Why all the current articles, books, and workshops focused on coping with it? Because in the past few decades, research scientists and medical practitioners have become convinced of, and are at last widely publicizing, the fact that stressors affecting us in ways that are even moderately intense but prolonged and repeated are causing illness and bringing on death in alarming proportions.

People are beginning to understand that such afflictions as peptic ulcers, ulcerative colitis, high blood



pressure, coronary artery disease, strokes, arthritis, hyperthyroidism, sexual impotence, and bronchial asthma, as well as a broad range of psychiatric disorders, can be considered preventable because they are associated with stress that could be avoided or at least diminished. Still, a million deaths occur in the United States each year as a result of heart attacks and strokes alone. This fact reveals that the growing public awareness of the stress-relatedness of such events has not yet resulted in wide enough recognition of early warning signs and in the taking of appropriate measures to avoid illness.

Some of the danger signs that different individuals may detect in themselves as evidence of stress have been pinpointed by Selye. It is important to remember that those signs and symptoms are highly personalized—that is, caused by a malfunctioning of whatever organ or system of the body is—in a particular individual—most vulnerable. In other words, because of a hereditary or life-generated predisposition, under comparable stressful circumstances one person will develop a headache; another, a backache; a third will feel dizzy. Each of us could benefit by reflecting on Selye's list in order to learn to recognize which danger signs are being manifested in times of stress in our own lives. He includes: (1) general irritability, hyperexcitation, or depression; (2) pounding of the heart (an indication of high blood pressure); (3) dryness of the throat and mouth; (4) impulsive behavior; emotional instability; (5) the overpowering urge to cry or to run and hide; (6) inability to concentrate, flight of thoughts, and general disorientation; (7) a predilection to become fatigued, and the loss of *joie de vivre*; (8) "free-floating anxiety" (i.e., we are afraid, although we do not know precisely what it is we are fearing); (9) emotional tension and alertness, a feeling of being "keyed up"; (10) trembling, nervous tic (i.e., brief, recurrent, irresistible movement of a small segment of the body); (11) a tendency to be easily startled by sounds that are not loud; (12) high-pitched, nervous laughter; (13) stuttering and other speech difficulties; (14) gnashing or grinding of the teeth; (15) insomnia; (16) hyperirritability; (17) sweating; (18) the frequent need to urinate; (19) diarrhea, indigestion, queasiness in the stomach, and sometimes even vomiting; (20) migraine headaches; (21) premenstrual tension or missed menstrual cycles; (22) pain in the neck or lower back; (23) loss of appetite or compulsive eating; (24) increased smoking; (25) increased use of legally prescribed drugs, such as tranquilizers or amphetamines; (26) alcohol or drug addiction; (27) nightmares; (28) neurotic behavior; (29) psychoses; and (30) a marked proneness to accidents.

## SIGNS OF STRESS IN OTHERS

Many people are inclined to overlook the signs of stress that appear in their own lives. But those who are serious about reducing the risk of becoming ill often find it helpful to ask a spouse or good friend whether he or she is noticing any of these danger signals in them. Frequently, too, a leader will note that distress in the lives of his or her followers will manifest itself in the form of (1) absenteeism (avoidance of contact with the stressful situation); (2) poor work performance (slipping obviously below the person's ordinary level of competence); and (3) excessive use of defense mechanisms (e.g., denial, rationalization, or projection, which unconsciously enable one to fail to recognize, to explain away, or to find in someone else the flaws in oneself). Depression, experienced as a chronic sense of dejection over one's total situation in life, is another sign of stress. Anxiety is a further symptom of stress. It is perceived in oneself as a pervasive sense of apprehension, dread, and "uptightness" that develops when one anticipates danger, the source of which is largely unknown or unrecognized, and feels that one does not have effective plans for dealing with this threat.

## PHYSICAL AND MENTAL SIGNS

Increased alcohol consumption is another sign. People under stress are naturally in search of relief from the physical discomfort that exists in a body made tense by painful emotion. Alcohol provides this longed-for realization, but at a price. Far from taking away the cause of the stress, it is merely a palliative. Frequently, mounting pressures encountered at work or at home tend to invite more and more drinking, and it is this increase in intake that signals—often first to others—that stress is beginning to "get to" a person. Stepped-up coffee drinking or reliance upon sleeping pills, aspirin, or even laxatives can signal the same message.

Author Jack Tressider, in his popular book *Feel Younger, Live Longer*, offers helpful checklists that separate the mental from the physical signs of stress. He has observed that those who manifest three or more of the following physical signs may be placing their bodies under high risk from excessive stress: (1) excess weight for your age and height; (2) high blood pressure; (3) lack of appetite; (4) desire to eat as soon as a problem arises; (5) frequent heartburn; (6) chronic diarrhea or constipation; (7) inability to sleep; (8) feeling of constant fatigue; (9) frequent headaches; (10) need for aspirin or some other medication daily; (11) muscle spasms; (12) feeling of fullness although you have not eaten; (13) shortness of



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breath; (14) tendency toward fainting or nausea; (15) inability to cry or a tendency to burst into tears easily; (16) persistent sexual problems (frigidity, impotence, fear); and (17) excessive nervous energy that prevents sitting still and relaxing.

Having five or more from the following list of mental symptoms (or four from the two lists combined) suggests the same high-risk condition: (1) a constant feeling of uneasiness; (2) constant irritability with family and work associates; (3) boredom with life; (4) a recurrent feeling of being unable to cope with life; (5) anxiety about money; (6) morbid fear of disease, especially cancer and heart disease; (7) fear of death—your own and others'; (8) a sense of suppressed anger; (9) an inability to have a good laugh; (10) a feeling of being rejected by your family or community; (11) a sense of despair at being unsuccessful as parent, teacher, leader, etc.; (12) dread as the week-end approaches; (13) reluctance to take a vacation; (14) a feeling you can't discuss your problems with anyone; (15) an inability to concentrate for any length of time or to finish one job before beginning another one; (16) an uncontrollable terror of heights, enclosed spaces, thunderstorms, or earthquakes.

Those in positions of leadership who detect in themselves or in their followers a sufficient number of these red flags to suggest that they may be walking a path to disease should certainly not panic or despair. The appropriate response is to seek out the sources of the stress and then to devise a suitable remedy.

## LEADER-FOLLOWER RELATIONSHIPS

What might be called the classical sources of stress arising from the leader-follower relationship would seem to provide a logical starting point for one who is looking for the origins of distress in any given situation. Both leader and follower may want to achieve the same fundamental goal, but a clash is likely to occur if their preferences regarding the means to that end are contrary to each other. For example, on one hand the leader may be, by nature, a task-oriented person who feels that Christ's desire for the church is accomplished by leader and followers devoting themselves unstintingly and incessantly to accomplishing worthwhile endeavors ("good works"). A follower, on the other hand, desiring to fulfill the same ultimate aim, may personally need and desire a leisurely social atmosphere in which to function, a climate for *agape*. The follower may find that the leader's efforts to keep him or her constantly active at doing things prevents the establishment of close relationships and shared affection. Under conditions such as these, it is virtually inevitable that both leader and follower will end up feeling frustrated—the former because he or she will sense that the follower is resisting leadership, the latter because this fundamental need remains unfulfilled. Obviously, if both leader and follower preferred the same goal and at the same time needed and desired the same means to that end, no stress (at least not from this source) would occur.

Another classic example would arise from the style of leadership adopted. When both leader and follower naturally prefer, and the leader adopts, an autocratic approach (one in which the leader commands and expects compliance, is dogmatic and positive, and leads by the ability to withhold or give rewards and punishment), mutual satisfaction ensues. But suppose that the follower has an intense need and desire for a leader whose style is democratic (i.e., the leader consults with subordinates on proposed actions and decisions and encourages participation from them). In this case, again, when the leader does not provide what is needed or what the follower feels entitled to, both the follower and the leader are destined to suffer stress, as the desires of both are being frustrated.

What is the nature of the stress that is experienced by leader and follower in such situations? It can take various specific forms, depending upon the personalities involved. First of all, frustration (experienced whenever fulfillment of one's needs, wishes, desires, or plans is prevented) automatically produces anger, one of the unpleasant and painful emotions. Not uncommonly, people who are angry handle their frustration by blaming someone other than themselves



for their inability to achieve the fulfillment of their desires and needs. They become hostile and tend to lash out at those they are blaming. A leader may turn hostile, as may a follower—but not necessarily. Some people, when their wishes are frustrated, become angry and blame themselves for their lack of success in achieving their aims. They become depressed and often experience feelings of guilt or shame as well.

Complicating the examples we are considering could be unconscious elements. Nobody ever has simply one need at a time, and we are never consciously aware of all our needs or wishes. In fact, by the process of denial, which was mentioned earlier, we may even inadvertently blind ourselves to what is really happening in our own emotional lives. In the example where the follower is not deriving from the leader's behavior the kind of help desired, he or she becomes frustrated and angry. Still, the follower may not be able consciously to accept as real either the anger or the hostility he or she feels toward the leader. Why not? Because the follower may also have such a strong and constant need to please and win the approval of any authority figure (starting with parents) that he or she dare not acknowledge, even to himself or herself, these strong negative feelings. So, deep down inside, the follower is in conflict. Part of himself or herself is motivating the follower to show hostile resentment; another part is prompting the follower to act content, appreciative, and supportive of the leader. Such conflict inevitably generates the type of tension and anxiety we consider to be evidence of stress. This can occur in the leader too. All the leader need do is pretend to himself or herself, as well as to the follower, that his or her heart is full of unalloyed love and gratitude, when in fact the leader is also feeling resentment because of the opposition he or she senses, and the leader too will experience the tension that comes from being in ambivalent inner conflict. A little more stress enters the scene.

We could go on citing examples. Some people are stressed when they hear criticism, from below as well as from above. Some are so impatient that any delay in executing their plans produces immediate anger, if not rage. Some are so perfectionistic that even the slightest flaw in performance (their own or another's) becomes intolerable to them. Others are so competitive that not even for a moment can they relax and escape the anxious tension that they feel. Stress can and does arise in countless ways in group situations when leadership is involved. But that doesn't mean that all the painful signs and symptoms, the stress-related illnesses, and the premature fatalities mentioned earlier must necessarily occur.

There are means that leaders and followers can employ to cope with the kinds of interpersonal

situations likely to produce stress. These can at least diminish, if not completely eliminate, the self-destructive consequences. Some can be presented in the form of insights derived from behavioral sciences and from practical clinical experience with people who have sought professional help to find better ways to deal with the stressors in their lives. Other methods can be presented in the form of specific techniques that can be learned and put into practice with the same goal in mind.

## HOW TO COPE WITH STRESS

Let's begin to establish a more effective coping repertory by examining a series of insights outlined by Dr. Jere Yates of Pepperdine University in his recent book *Managing Stress*. (His suggestions are italicized.)

1. *Build and maintain an adequate sense of self-esteem.* People with a decreased sense of personal worth are more likely to become anxious and hostile when they perceive they are being treated negatively in interpersonal relationships. Self-esteem develops when we feel loved and able to show love in return, especially in devoted service to others or to a worthy cause.

2. *Establish "stability zones"* (areas of your life in which little or no change is taking place or is occurring at a relatively slower pace than in other parts of your life). This helps reduce the amount of stress you must cope with when life tends to become filled with turbulent change. Religion, close family and community ties, customs, traditions, and routines help to provide an increased sense of stability and security.

3. *Develop effectiveness and efficiency in employing your competencies.* People who are uncertain of their skills and other abilities are more inclined to feel stress when they are called upon to perform. Continuing education and performance-monitoring or "supervision" (e.g., by consultants, directors, friends) can facilitate life-long development.

4. *Strengthen your professional qualifications.* People only weakly qualified are more vulnerable to suffering from stress. Think of a teacher with poor credentials or degrees when the time comes for reduction of faculty size. People with strong qualifications experience less stress when crisis comes because they have more options available to them.

5. *Learn cognitive strategies.* Most important among the factors determining your reaction to a stressor is the way you perceive it or think about it. Manag-



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**The person who is manifesting and receiving such qualities as warmth, kindness, caring, and cherishing is experiencing a healing of the wounds that distress may have caused**

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ing your thoughts is an effective means of reducing stress. For example, acknowledge that the stress you are experiencing will not last forever, or that what is a fact is a fact, and there's no use arguing about it. Talk to yourself in times of stress. Decide in advance what words you are going to say to yourself in moments of pressure. (Example: When the leader starts finding fault with me, I'll tell myself, "Don't argue; listen; you might learn something useful.") Rehearse again and again what you plan to say. Replace the "self talk" statements that don't successfully hold down your stress.

**6. Take sufficient vacations.** Uninterrupted long-term encounters with stressors create distress. Our body tissues and organs need intermittent relief from constant bombardment by stress-related hormones and other biochemicals that will otherwise eventually produce illness. A break is not long enough if one does not return to action feeling rejuvenated as well as relaxed.

**7. Live lovingly.** The person who is manifesting and receiving such qualities as warmth, kindness, caring, and cherishing is experiencing a healing of the wounds that distress may have caused. When Jesus prescribed that his weary disciples should "come apart and rest," it was to be "with me." I am quite certain this provision was essential; they were in need of experiencing Jesus' presence as healing, stress-reducing Love.

**8. Clarify your personal values and live according to them.** Behavior that is at cross-purposes with your ideals cannot help but increase your stress level. You may not be consciously aware of this impact, but given enough time, it will eventually take its toll. Books on "values clarification" are often helpful to a religious person sincerely desiring to eliminate personal stress arising from this source. So is the annual retreat, which affords opportunity to rearrange the activities of one's life so that they are in harmony with one's real values.

**9. Monitor your own life's pace.** Stress comes from attempting to do too much, always striving to please others and never oneself, and neglecting to live a balanced life. Time is needed for physical exercise and play, as well as rewarding work; for soul-satisfying prayer and other spiritual exercises; for gratifying intellectual pursuits; and for heart-expanding cultural experiences of beauty. Our need for novelty and for creative accomplishments is too easily overlooked in religious people's busy and altruistic lives. If we are positioned through God's Providence to serve others by helping them learn to discover the full richness and goodness of life, surely in conscience we ought first to learn how to develop our own total humanity and love of life, with God's help, so that belief, reliance, and learning can become possible for others when we offer ourselves as their leaders or helpers.

## **EIGHT RECOMMENDATIONS**

To end this article on stress and ways of coping with it—especially in leadership situations, in which influence is deliberately involved—it might be useful to list eight brief recommendations Selye has made after a lifetime of research and practical experience. Jere Yates has provided this paraphrasing of these guidelines from the master:

- 1.** Don't waste your time trying to befriend those who don't want to be recipients of your love and friendship.
- 2.** Don't be a perfectionist; strive to do something that is within your capabilities.
- 3.** Don't underestimate the genuine pleasure that can come from the simple things in life.
- 4.** Carefully assess each situation to see whether a syntoxic (tolerate it) or catatoxic (engage it in battle) response will serve you best. Only fight for that which is really worth it.



5. Concentrate on the pleasant side of life and on the activities that can improve your lot. As the old proverb says, "Imitate the sundial's ways; count only the pleasant hours."

6. When you do experience a setback or defeat, reestablish your self-confidence by remembering all your past accomplishments.

7. Don't procrastinate in tackling the unpleasant yet necessary tasks you have to do. Get them over with quickly.

8. Realize that people are unequal in many ways at birth. All people should have access to equal opportunities, and their progress should be evaluated on the basis of their performance. Leaders are leaders only as long as they have the respect and loyalty of their followers.

In March 1977, *U.S. News & World Report* sent a journalist to interview Selye. The last question the writer asked him was this: "If you had to give one piece of advice to people about stress, what would you say to them?" His reply was straightforward: "I would offer the wisdom of the Bible translated into terms a scientist can easily accept today: Earn thy neighbor's love."

## RECOMMENDED READING

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Woolfolk, R., and F. Richardson. *Stress, Sanity, and Survival*. New York, New York: Monarch, 1978.

Yates, J. *Managing Stress*. New York, New York: AMACOM, 1979.

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## Prayer on the Internet

As a number of the articles in this issue have to do with prayer, I thought that some readers might be interested in websites that are helpful for prayer. Being a Jesuit, I know Jesuit sites best. There are many others, of course, but here are some that can get you started.

A site that has won many accolades was developed by the Irish Jesuits and is called Sacred Space. It can be located at <http://www.jesuit.ie/prayer>.

Another site that offers a number of ways of praying, especially those based on the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola, has been developed by the Jesuits at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska. Its location: <http://www.puffin.creighton.edu/jesuit>.

Father Robert Gilroy, S.J., an artist and retreat di-

rector, has a website called Prayerwindows.com, in which he uses his own artwork to help people to pray. This feast for the eyes as well as for the soul can be found at <http://www.prayerwindows.com>.

Finally, the website maintained by the Jesuit Conference of the United States has links to many other sources for Ignatian prayer. You can search this site at <http://jesuit.org> for spirituality resources.

If you should be able to locate copies of the *Tablet*—the weekly journal published by Catholic laypeople from London—you will find frequently a column by Lavinia Byrne, who recommends and describes websites of interest, many of them about prayer.

—William A. Barry, S.J.



# Self-Transformation

*Cheryl A. France, S.C., M.D.*

**P**rayer effects change. Anyone who has embarked on a serious, committed relationship with God and who has made prayer a consistent part of his or her life can attest to that. All of the spiritual giants who have written or taught about growth in the spiritual life would advise that prayer is an important aspect of that growth.

It would stand to reason that making it a priority to dwell in the presence of God in prayer would help us grow in holiness. But how precisely this work of God, this action of grace, takes place has always been mystery—a numinous reality to which serious Christians have submitted and from which they have derived much benefit in becoming more Christlike in their persons. I believe that if we consider how our minds are actually changed through the process of memory formation, we can learn to cooperate more fully with the grace operative in our prayer and our daily existence, and so facilitate our spiritual growth.

There are many ways to pray. In this article, I will consider meditation, or mental prayer—the prayer practiced in *lectio divina* or a prayerful reading and reflection on scripture. Meditation consists in use of the intellect, the external senses, the imagination, and memory. These mental faculties are applied to the object of meditation, but that is only the start. All of those thought processes really occur to facilitate

movement deeper toward an affective response to the object of my meditation. Thomas Merton, in his book *Spiritual Direction and Meditation*, made this point well when he observed that true prayer involves not just the mind but also the heart:

To meditate is to exercise the mind in serious reflection . . . reflection involves, though, not only the mind but the heart . . . one who really meditates does not merely think; he also loves and by his love, or at least by his sympathetic intuition into the reality upon which he reflects, enters into that reality and knows it so to speak from within.

Neuropsychological research, especially that which has elucidated the mechanisms of memory formation, shows that there are intimate connections between those functions we have previously dichotomized into heart and mind. A brief review of some of this research can help us see how a life of prayer actually shapes the nature of these connections and thus transforms our very person.

## LOCUS OF LOVE

The “heart,” when referred to as the locus of love, more accurately describes not the organ within our chests but an area of our brains. The limbic system,



a group of brain structures located deep within the cerebral cortex, controls and mediates emotion, attention, attachment, and several other vital life functions. The limbic system is the phylogenetically oldest part of the brain. It is well developed in lower species; volume-wise, it actually constitutes a greater percentage of the overall brain in lower animals than in humans.

The limbic system, besides being the locus of love, also has an important role in learning and memory. When we watch an event, read a passage, listen to a story, or receive any type of sensory input, the information is filtered through the limbic system. Hence, as the information is fed to other areas of the brain for processing and storage (thus forming into a memory), it carries with it an emotional valence or an overlay of feelings that will be associated with the memory.

The initial route for memory processing is through the limbic system, along separate paths to various brain regions (e.g., the visual, auditory, and motor areas of the brain). But as the memory trace strengthens, a whole new set of interlinking networks forms, connecting directly each of the separate brain regions involved in the memory. Subsequently, the emotional and sensory aspects of the memory join together in an integrated fashion in the stored information.

Our emotional state while forming a memory affects the way the memory is encoded or stored, as well as which cues activate the memory. Traumatic experiences, accompanied by extreme fear, can overwhelm the limbic system to such an extent that memory formation is impaired. Studies of combat veterans and those who have suffered traumata such as sexual or physical abuse indicate that the integration of the emotional and other aspects of the experience is skewed. This can result in general emotional numbing or, in the face of an event that triggers a memory of the experience, seemingly unwarranted emotional volatility.

On the other hand, manageable levels of anxiety during an experience can heighten awareness and improve motivation to remember. This type of anxiety may aid us when, for example, we study for a test or make an effort to remember the names of our boss's children.

## ASPECTS OF MEMORY

There are various ways of categorizing memories. For our discussion here, I would like to explore briefly two different aspects of memory: implicit versus explicit, and long-term versus short-term and immediate.

Explicit memory is that which is formed con-

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Given the extraordinary reality that our brains change as our experiences become memories, we can see how transformative of our minds and hearts a life of prayer can be

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sciously and is therefore associated with an awareness of the source of information. Examples include reading a book and remembering the story, or walking in the woods and being mindful of which forks in the trail were taken so as not to get lost on the return. This is the type of memory that is most readily assessed with testing and what most of us are thinking about when we marvel at the ability of certain persons to remember their schedule without a calendar.

Implicit memory is memory for information or experience whose source is largely out of our awareness. This type of memory probably begins early in life and includes the learning of skills and conditioning (e.g., riding a bicycle, hearing church bells and thinking of the Angelus, or associating the smell of cigars with grandfather). Because the process is unconscious, we are forming these memories all the time without knowing it, just through exposure to life circumstances. Implicit memory seems to persist and to be highly resilient, as it is preserved in persons with amnesia or Alzheimer's disease who have lost explicit memory.

Explicit memory of facts or events can be categorized as immediate, short-term, or long-term. Immediate memory is the ability to repeat something right after one is exposed to it (e.g., a phone number). It is actually a function of paying attention. Short-term or recent memory requires that the memory be stored and retrieved over a period of time, ranging from minutes to days. Generally, this requires some



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## Our emotional investment—the desire of our heart when we come to prayer—will have a significant impact on the effect of the prayer experience on us

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conscious effort at remembering. Long-term or remote memory is that which has been stored for months or years. Usually, a short-term memory must be brought to mind from time to time before it becomes a long-term memory. Memories go through a necessary progression from immediate to short-term to long-term.

The prerequisite for any type of explicit memory formation is attention. At a cellular level, briefly-held memories are accompanied by the release of neurotransmitters (chemical substances), which increase the activity of neurons (brain cells). This excitation in the brain occurs for a relatively short period of time. But some memories, especially those considered important enough to rehearse or those formed from repeated exposure to a piece of information or experience, go through a period of consolidation—a process that takes days to years and is accompanied by actual changes in brain structure.

For long-term memory formation, genetic expression is actually altered and new proteins are synthesized, leading to the physical growth of neural processes and enhanced connectivity among neurons. This is the process alluded to earlier in the discussion of the emotional content of memories. Consolidation is aided by rehearsal and reinforcement of the memory, so that the connections continue to strengthen with time. Each newly formed memory may modify or enhance older memory connections, depending on the coherence among the memories formed at various times.

Animal studies show that greater numbers of behavioral experiences, especially early in life, greatly enhance the number of neural connections in the brain. Even in older animals, training can have a similar effect, although it occurs more slowly. So you can teach an old dog new tricks—it just takes longer.

### TRANSFORMATION BY PRAYER

Given the extraordinary reality that our brains change as our experiences become memories, we can see how literally transformative of our minds and hearts (limbic systems) a life of prayer can be. First, the very act of paying attention to God is the beginning step in changing our minds. My personal encounter with God enters into my immediate memory. Distractions—a normal part of prayer for most of us—may come to mind as I pray. But if I gently return to the One to whom I desire to attend, rather than to the other issues competing for my attention, it will be God, not the other things, forming my brain chemistry and structure.

Second, our emotional investment—the desire of our heart when we come to prayer—will have a significant impact on the effect of the prayer experience on us. The choice of a scripture or a mantra or an icon to pray with is an important aspect of prayer preparation. So too is the preparation of my heart. Ignatius of Loyola instructed those making the Spiritual Exercises to commence each prayer period asking for a grace.

Even becoming aware of what it is that I desire and asking God to grant the particular grace I need and want creates receptivity for growth. Probably a first step here is honesty in assessing my emotional state. Do I recognize when I am angry or fearful or lonely? Am I able to identify my feelings and come to my prayer acknowledging those feelings to God? Such knowledge can help me articulate my desires to God as I enter into prayer. Also, my emotions can then be in tune with the words coming from my mouth or with my meditation on a scripture. For example, if I am praying with the Matthew passage, in which Jesus calls Peter to walk on the water, I may enter into the prayer expecting to identify with Peter and the disciples, fearful in the boat. But if I notice that my feeling state is angry and confused, I may choose instead to identify with the wild, churning waves of water, crying out for the calming footsteps of Jesus upon them.

Third, repetition, or returning to a particular scripture or image through which we have met God, is important for long-lasting effects on our brain structure. Returning repeatedly to the place of encounter with God provides the substance for strong bonds of mem-



ory formation. Ignatius must have intuited this, as the Spiritual Exercises prescribe frequent repetition of meditations. Prayer becomes deeper and richer with each repetition.

In praying with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, I may progress from experiencing my own weariness, to being with Jesus in his resolve, to feeling an abiding sense of the Father's care and presence, with each repetition of the prayer providing fresh nuances of meaning and experience. Subsequent prayer with the passage months or years later will be facilitated by the neural connections already formed from our prior prayer. Further strengthening or alteration of our brain structure may be effected by the new prayer experience, as well as by the other intervening events of life.

Keeping a journal or sharing our prayer experience with a spiritual director or trusted friend leads to even broader memory formation through the recruitment of regions of the brain other than those involved in silent meditation. Use of the Examen, especially as a means of reviewing our day while looking for God's presence and our response in it, is another means of reinforcing the memory traces begun during our time of prayer. Formal prayer, as well as recollection of God's presence during other moments in the day, will influence how our memories form. Thinking about an experience or recalling an event, a person, or an emotion serves to consolidate the memory.

If we pay attention to our stray thoughts, we may be able to determine what type of memory consolidation is occurring. If we frequently ruminate on negative, anger-arousing, or anxiety-provoking material, the related memory traces will leave their indelible mark on new brain structure. Likewise, reflecting on life-giving experiences, relationships, and emotions also effects change, but of a more positive nature. As brain circuits are reinforced, memories are more readily recalled and more durable. Thus, conscious attempts at "praying always" will become more automatic as the actual structure of one's brain becomes more geared toward this activity.

Because younger brains are more malleable, it bodes well to pray early as well as often—that is, to cultivate a life of prayer early in life rather than waiting until we retire from other pressing activities. However, even older brains are susceptible to the transforming power of prayer, so it is never too late to start.

## POWER OF IMPLICIT MEMORY

Implicit (unconsciously formed) memories can affect behavior without involving an explicit memory or

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## Keeping a journal or sharing our prayer experience with a spiritual director or trusted friend broadens memory formation

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record of the event itself. For example, the television or radio may be on in my home, but I may not be attending to it; it's just background noise. Yet I may unconsciously recollect or act upon the content of that "noise" at a future time. Perhaps I will buy a particular soap powder without any conscious rationale as to why I chose that brand. Similarly, as I walk through a thicket of pine in the woods, I may be flooded with memories of my grandmother. There is no conscious connection, but perhaps grandmother's woodshed had that same scent, of which I do not recall being cognizant. By the way, our olfactory nerve, which detects smells, connects directly to the limbic system, and it is very common for particular odors to evoke memories and strong emotions.

Implicit memory has a vital impact on our life of prayer. Use of scents while meditating can invoke this powerful connection to our brains. Paying attention, during prayer, to bodily sensations, sounds, visual images, and smells—all of which might otherwise remain in the background—can lead us to a heightened awareness of that which is actually being taken into ourselves. We can reflect on how God may be speaking to us through our tense shoulders or the comforting feel of the prayer blanket under us.

At times other than those reserved for formal prayer, we can cultivate mindfulness, taking in that which usually lies outside of our consciousness. We can recognize our stewardship for our minds in terms of what we expose ourselves to in our environment as well as in our thinking patterns. Even small alterations in how we live and interact with our surroundings may have a far-reaching impact on our neurobiology.



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Even small alterations in how we live and interact with our surroundings may have a far-reaching impact on our neurobiology

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Clearly, our brains change as we form memories in the context of our prayer. So let us attend to Paul's exhortation to "be transformed"—literally—"by the renewal of your mind" (Rom. 12:2).



Sister Cheryl France, S.C., M.D., a psychiatrist practicing in rural Appalachia, is an assistant professor in the Department of Behavioral Medicine and Psychiatry at West Virginia University.

## Answer Hostility with Compassion

**A**dvice from Khejok Rinpoche, a high Tibetan lama now living in Australia: "When you face a hostile person, think about this: he is simply having a hard time trying to find happiness and avoid suffering. It just so happens that when he was going about doing so, you got in the way. See yourself in him and your anger will melt away." Doug Conlan, an Australian priest who is a friend of the Rinpoche, cited this quote in an article he wrote for the London *Tablet* (11 January 2003, p. 12).

Very often, when we meet a hostile person, our ini-

tial response is fear or anger. If we act out either of these reactions, we increase the level of hostility in our world. If, however, we can, by grace, respond as the Rinpoche suggests, then we add to the level of compassion in our world.

The same edition of the *Tablet* contains an African proverb, printed beneath some e-mails from the AIDS Office of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference: "If you think you are too small to make a difference, try sleeping in a closed room with a mosquito."

# Formation for Nonviolence

*Marie Beha, O.S.C., Ph.D.*

**T**he waiting room was beginning to fill up when the young mother came in. She had a baby in a carrier on one arm, a three-year-old girl by the hand, and a small boy close by her side. Initially, her distinctive dress—bonnet, shawl, long skirt—evoked some stares, but most people soon went back to paging through their magazines. I kept looking. What struck me about the woman was her air of quiet self-possession. When she sat down opposite me, I noticed that her children were equally quiet. The mother put the baby, in the carrier, down on the floor; the boy crouched next to the carrier and gently rocked it back and forth. The little girl climbed into a chair next to her mother and settled down contentedly. Nothing had been said, not even an injunction to “be good.” The young mother sat quiet, relaxed, and peaceful. The children did the same.

That picture stayed with me long after I left the doctor’s office, just because it offered such a marked contrast to the restless impatience of so many in that waiting room and in the world beyond it. We live in a culture where nervous energy spills over into agitation, agitation builds up into anger, and anger too often culminates in violence. Even if the latter is no more audible than a half-suppressed sigh of frustration, it contributes to the pollution of the environment in which we all live. Ours is a culture of violence

as pervasive as the air we breathe. That is how it is with culture: we take it in and give it out, advertent to it only when something goes wrong that makes us hold our breath or gasp for air.

The events of September 11, 2001, made us do both: we held our breath in sheer shock and then found ourselves gasping for some kind of security in a shattered world. At least that is how many of us felt as we tried to come to grips with a tragedy of that magnitude. This was violence larger than life, in Technicolor.

The destructive use of force in individual everyday life is just as real, though less large in size and so monochromatic that we can usually ignore it. Still, it is there. Perhaps one of the gifts of the World Trade Center tragedy is that it reveals our everyday violence for what it is: the violent disruption of so many lives by so few. Can the nonviolence of some begin to convert our culture of violence to the ways of peace? We have to start somewhere; the place of first response seems to me to be the heart of each one of us.

This is not to say that it ends there. Unless nonviolence is embodied, it is not human; unless it effects change in the world, it is not true love of neighbor. One of the graces of our times is the deepening realization not only that “neighbor” is all-inclusive but also that real love must bring about structural



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## We are often not aware of how much force we bring to bear in responding to the small vexations of ordinary days

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changes as well as convert hearts. Both are necessary and integral to a Christian response to violence. Where do we begin?

### THE VIOLENT HEART

More and more, I am aware that what is outside of me has been taken in; that what is inside of me does contribute to the culture of violence around me. I am sorry about both. My repentance, like all true conversion, goes from inside out.

Recognition begins the process. I am a violent woman. No, I don't own a gun, have never fired one, and have no intention of learning how to do so. Long years of careful socialization usually control my actions, and my vocabulary of explosive terms is too limited to be very satisfying. I am too inhibited to push or shove, too polite to shout or scream. All of which proves nothing. Violence isn't always noisy, especially in its internal beginnings.

Relationships are a good place to start because they test the spirit and because we are always in relationship. How I respond to others, even to myself, reveals who and how I am. My morning might begin in violence as I smash the button of my ringing alarm clock, resentful of its shrill summons from still-needed sleep. Getting into the shower and realizing I have forgotten my towel, I berate myself for being so stupid. At breakfast I discover an almost-empty cereal box still on the shelf and express my frustration over someone's thoughtlessness by pulling angrily at the inner wax-paper wrapper of a fresh box. Even my hurried attempt at mouthing a Morning Offering can do violence to any real spirit of prayer. So begins my day.

And so it goes on. It is just an ordinary day, nothing noteworthy. You are probably recognizing that it is very much like your own. Little frustrations call forth impatient responses, making it difficult to adjust to still other stresses. Such low-level violence accompanies much of our living. It's like the background hum of a heater or air conditioner: we don't pay attention unless the disturbance reaches a certain threshold that sounds like trouble.

Violence ratcheted up a bit is usually interpersonal. Road rage doesn't infect drivers only. It can spill over onto anyone who gets in our way, literally or figuratively. The person who insists on carrying on an animated conversation at the serving table in the cafeteria or attempts to cut in ahead in the long line at the checkout counter makes me clear my throat as audibly as possible; I wish I had a car's horn to lean on. If another person's request requires me to change my carefully constructed plans. I am annoyed and all too often let others know it. Even if no one else hears my sigh of exasperation, it echoes in my heart. Resentment builds up inside and is released in ready response to the next frustration that comes my way. As the size of the annoyance needed to set me off decreases, the force of my reaction increases. With this rise in the level of my own frustration, there is greater likelihood that my violence will be met with violence in return, setting in motion a chain reaction.

Body language speaks even if nothing is said. An annoyed cough, a gesture of impatience, a reproving look, or even a too-carefully-controlled tone of voice betrays the anger I resist acknowledging. And that is another aspect of my personally violent world: I am often not aware of how much force I bring to bear in responding to the small vexations of ordinary days. Because nothing is said or done about my responses, I fail to see the tiny clouds that signal a storm building up. Me, angry? I protest innocence, even as I experience anger at being thought angry. Denying the obvious inflicts violence on the truth itself. My very defensiveness hints at how uneasy I am.

Why am I so violent? It is a question I often ask myself, especially when my response has been so explosive that I can no longer deny what is going on. All too often I mistakenly begin by replaying the originating incident. This risks entangling me in a web of what he or she said, did, or didn't do, with its counterpoint of what I said, did, or didn't do. As the original dialogue gets reviewed, I add commentary about the other's motivation. Heat is generated, but not much light.

More productively, I might focus on my own response, since I cannot answer the "why" of anyone else's. Granted, it is possible that I am outraged by some injustice done to self or other, and the violence

of my response may be proportionate to the seriousness of this assault on human dignity. How likely is this? Even raising the issue speeds recognition of the real source of my violence. Rarely do I experience justified anger protesting what is due another. Usually, the focus is on me: my perceived rights, needs, desires. My ego has been bruised, and it is this that I am protesting. Ninety-nine percent of the time, I eventually have to admit that I am reacting violently because I have fallen out of love.

Violence usually points back to the selfish self that is the still-to-grow-up child sitting at the center of an immature ego. This “I” sees everything primarily in relation to its effects on self; the other is at best an afterthought. Such a myopic focus so constricts my world that whatever happens looms larger than life. Loss of perspective magnifies slights into insults, disagreements into conflicts, another’s simple oversight into deliberate aggression. What happened in the past continues to reverberate in the present and threatens the future. Forgiveness and fresh beginnings are unimaginable.

The selfish self is trapped. No wonder it reacts with violence; it perceives its very existence as threatened. The only viable response to such an attack is counterattack. When two entrapped egos bump against each other, a chain reaction begins and soon spills over to others. Noncombatants find themselves endangered and must choose, on the basis of their temperament, either to join the fight or to flee. Neither response promotes lasting peace.

## MAKING PEACE

The hard work of growing into a less violent response begins not with the other but with the self, as only a secure self can risk this kind of relationship. How do we grow into such security? It is not a project but a gift—something that we receive from another whose love for us has been clearly evident, constant, and consistent. Ideally, this is the kind of love we received at the very beginning of our lives from our parents. When we were first able to focus on the face bending over us, we found reflected there all the tenderness of parental prejudice. We knew we were “precious” and a “joy” because they told us so.

That same parental love responded to our basic needs, accompanied us as we began to explore an ever-wider world, enjoyed our triumphs, and comforted us in our pain. Patiently, it gave us space and time to make the mistakes that are an inevitable part of growing into responsible personhood and faithfully welcomed us back after we had wandered away.

Unfortunately, most of us have not experienced such ideal parental love. What we have known has

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**Self-forgetful love begins  
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been more or less flawed and inadequate. Hopefully, that original lack has been supplemented by a lifetime of experiences of knowing that we are loved by others and thus lovable. Only to the extent that this gift has been received from many others and appropriated into our experience are we secure enough to begin the hard work of responding less violently to others. Only then can we get beyond self and focus on the other.

Such openness to reality outside of ourselves is never automatic and is especially difficult when we have been hurt; nothing concentrates attention on self as quickly as pain. My emotions tell me that my suffering deserves a response in kind, and so I am tempted to lash out through some form of violence. “Pushed” in one way or another, I push back. “Injury for injury” is the ethic of violence; generations of racial, tribal, and ethnic wars have been justified in this way. Brothers and sisters, neighborhoods and families still cover over violence with this same excuse.

All of this substantiates that violence rises out of an ego that has shrunk to the size of self-preoccupation. We use self-defense to justify responding to force with still more force. Culture reinforces this pattern until violence seems so natural that it is barely recognized for what it is. The rationale of childhood, “He/she hit me first,” becomes accepted protocol among adults. An impoverished ego cannot afford to be generous.

Which brings us back to love—first of all, to the need for secure self-love. Reflected in the mirror of



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## Recognizing the violence in our personal response and turning away from it is a lifelong discipline

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another's genuine love, we have come to accept ourselves as we really are. No longer expecting ourselves to be perfect, we are able to acknowledge our mistakes, accept our weaknesses, even forgive our most shameful sins. Faced with irrefutable evidence of our sinfulness, we can still believe we are lovable just because we are.

And so is the person who has hurt us. Self-forgetful love begins to convert our instinct for violence into openness, understanding, and concern for the other, even for our enemy—and anyone with whom we are in conflict becomes, at least in that situation, the enemy. Gospel love is tested, as we know, not by our response to those whom we find naturally attractive (the “pagans do as much” [Matt. 5:47]) but by our willingness to respond lovingly to those who oppose us. The latter include not only those who take positive action against us but also a long litany of others: those who are so different we find them impossible to understand, those whose lifestyle demands constant adjustment of our own, those whose values are antithetical to what we hold dear. The continuum runs from the individual who drowns us in angry words to the one who threatens our life.

Responding nonviolently to all enemies costs dearly because it goes beyond generous self-gift and into self-sacrifice. When we love those who love us, we give, but we also receive. We are built up in love by such relationships; in contrast, love of enemies seems, at first, to be self-defeating. If they win, we lose; such is the logic of violence. No wonder loving our enemies seems beyond us. It is; that is part of its redemptive power. We can't do it ourselves; we can only open our hearts to this grace. Do we want to receive it?

## ANSWER OPPOSITION WITH LOVE

The desire to grow into nonviolence must go beyond a pious attitude; incarnation is necessary for redemption. This was true in the life of Jesus and is true in our own lives.

Because violence originates as a response to perceived opposition, growth in nonviolence must begin there. Recognizing the violence in our personal response and turning away from it is a lifelong discipline. I need to be aware of my tone of voice as I answer the persistently ringing phone that interrupts my train of thought; I need to notice how I tear open an envelope when I know that answering it will make demands on my precious time. My world has been broken into, and I resent the intrusion: this is my initial, almost instinctive reaction. What will be my response?

Of course, there may be no response; I may remain on the level of reaction. My emotions are real, manifested in my tightened gut, my clenched fist, or whatever is my own psychosomatic pattern of reaction to perceived opposition. But I don't have to remain there. While not denying what I feel, I do not allow it to dictate my choice of response. For response is just that: a personal, conscious choice. This ringing phone, this envelope in my mailbox, is part of my present reality. This is where my love is being challenged, where I am being called to conversion. Here grace is at work, empowering me to deny myself the satisfaction of escalating my initial reaction into a violent response.

When love informs my choice, I take a deep breath, unclench my fists, silence the quick retort, perhaps walk away. I do whatever I need to do to put some distance between the perceived opposition and myself. Notice: the situation remains; the only thing that has changed is myself. Maybe this is all that really has to change.

This distance between my offended self and the offender may be either geographic or temporal; what I do is give myself space and time. How? Different strategies work for different people. I may say “I can't talk now” and resolutely resist engaging in an argument, even if the other person demands that we “settle this right away.” As I walk away, I offer “We'll talk later,” and I mean just that.

A different distancing is called for when I find myself experiencing internal violence, even though I don't know its immediate source. I feel tense, angry, ready to lash out. Grace is at work, enabling me to acknowledge this and search for its cause. The temptation will be to justify myself by finding something or someone to blame. The very fact that I am inclined to do such a “search” could alert me to what

is going on. Something deeper is being touched. Rather than seeking distance, I need to focus on my experience, to stay with it and let it gradually reveal the deeper cause of my anger and violence. It is to that cause that I must direct my response.

If I stay with the experience and wait in prayerful patience, I may discover the specifics of that deeper woundedness which is occasioning my present difficulty. Perhaps I am upset because I am jealous, or I want to lash out at someone because I still grieve over a childish injustice, or my speech is harsh because I have been verbally abused myself. Here is the source of my violence; here is redemptive opportunity.

No matter what its source, violence does require some response. It cannot be safely ignored; energy has been aroused and must be released, though in ways appropriate to the source and the situation. I have found that brief physical expression can get rid of some of the tension in my body and free me to move on. For example, a letter that includes a verbal attack can be shredded into satisfyingly small bits and dropped into the nearest wastebasket. One caution, however: extensive physical expression may perpetuate rather than release pent-up emotion. Violence begets violence.

When the conflict centers on differing opinions, another response may be more appropriate. A deliberate effort to focus on what the other is saying or not saying stands in marked contrast to my more natural tendency to start formulating a rebuttal. Failure to listen—one of those everyday forms of assault so ordinary we hardly recognize it—is the kind of defensiveness that I communicate in body language even when I say nothing. My impatience shows and adds to the tense atmosphere.

In contrast, when people of different opinions dialogue with each other, one to one, in an atmosphere of mutual respect and sensitivity to the other's position, with patient listening and honest sharing, love grows—even if the positions remain diametrically opposed. Both parties will have come closer to the truth because each will have been exposed to a different point of view; both will have grown in trust because they have risked conflict and come through in peace. Such a climate of understanding and mutual respect builds community, even if it doesn't solve the problems that occasioned the original disagreement.

"But," you say, "this describes the ideal. My attempts at dialogue don't usually go so smoothly." Mine don't either. So, what are some nonviolent ways to respond when, no matter how attentive our listening, we can't seem to hear each other—when past unresolved issues lie between us like a solid wall of misunderstanding, when our insecurities and emo-

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## To be peacemakers, we must first be at peace ourselves

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tional woundedness are so deep that rational discourse seems hopeless? (I am sure you can add your own list of difficulties to those I have just suggested.)

One starting place is to make sure that the issue is worth the conflict. Perhaps when I come right down to it, our disagreement is over matters of taste, over preferences rather than values, over timing more than substance. In such cases, I may decide to let the issue drop, at least for the present. I "give in"—not out of indifference, and surely not out of fear, but out of a real love that chooses what the other wants rather than what I want.

This is quite different from compromising on principles. In the latter case, we remain firm but, again, in love. We confront the other with the truth; we take our stand and remain there, even in the face of a violent reaction. That is what Jesus did. The gospels depict him in conflict with some of the Pharisees, confronting them in extremely strong language. But this was only at the end. Initially, Jesus tried persuasion, responded to questions, offered his credentials. All the while, he continued on his way to Jerusalem, knowing what awaited him there.

### NONVIOLENCE AND THE CROSS

On the cross, Jesus took in violence, transformed it, and returned only love. This is the ultimate form of nonviolent response. This is redemption. We make small beginnings on our journey to Jerusalem when we stop nursing the ego that has been wounded in some area of conflict, recognize and then resist the emotional satisfaction that comes from reviewing over and over the same stale list of grievances. We discipline ourselves to sit in silence before the Lord until some measure of peace is restored to our own soul and we can begin to respond in love. We keep our focus on God's mercy rather than on ourselves and our



own hurt and difficulty. Even when our peaceful overtures are rejected outright and we need to recognize this by shaking the dust off our feet, we remain confident that the peace we have extended to others will return to us (Mark 6:11). This begins the disciples' way of the cross—very costly, but ultimately the path to true life and peace.

In the face of conflict, our temptation is to respond in kind. Slowly and with the help of grace, we can begin to resist this natural reaction and to grow into self-sacrificing love. When others insist on their way, we let them have it. We choose to be inconvenienced ourselves rather than to have another suffer the same. We swallow the satisfying retort and move on in a silence that prevents the escalation of verbal violence. We reach out to those who hurt us, refusing to let their attitude determine our own. We consciously choose to forget when past hurts rise up in memory and intrude into present interpersonal space. We forgive without waiting to be asked—over and over again.

Such examples of self-sacrificing love are easily multiplied; living out their reality is painfully difficult because it cuts deep into the territory of the ego. It also requires careful discernment, so that the self is respected and real evil resisted. We are not doormats to be trampled on; allowing others repeatedly to impose on us is not true love either. Foundational to any true love of neighbor is love of self. Only when we are centered in the self that is beloved of God can we risk self-sacrifice.

But nonviolent response in love ultimately does involve sacrifice of self. It did for Jesus: "Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end" (John 13:1). He gave himself up for all of us while we were still sinners, accepting death for our sakes—even the shameful death of the cross. Suffering love effected our redemption. It still does—the death of Jesus first and foremost, but also our own willingness to die now, in our specific life situations.

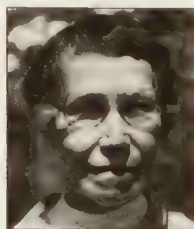
When our response rises from that center where the Spirit of Jesus directs and shapes our activities, we may be called to face with new awareness where our

own sinfulness has contributed to the difficulty and then to accept the need for personal conversion. Freed from the urgency to insist on our own way, we may discover opportunities to negotiate a compromise that will respect both of us. We may also be called to some form of active resistance that will take us out of the safety of our customary ways and require a more public stance. Moving beyond our fears, we may have to speak out the truth in which we believe, to take a stand and accept the risk that comes with doing so.

In this way, personal nonviolence begins to be embodied in our world. Action on the larger scale requires this rooting in immediate personal reality if it is to be sincere and to make a lasting difference. Mohandas Gandhi knew this when, to the bewilderment of his followers, he called off a scheduled mass demonstration because he believed that the protestors were not sufficiently pure in heart to carry it out in a truly nonviolent fashion.

Confronting nonviolence in the smaller space where we live our everyday lives also helps us avoid the discouragement that can defeat us in the face of the magnitude of the violence in our world. There is something we can do. We do make a difference.

Personal nonviolence and social nonviolence are both necessary. One without the other is incomplete. If the stress in this article has been on the former, it comes out of the conviction that this is where we must begin; otherwise, our efforts at peacemaking can easily end up only adding to the violence in our world. To be peacemakers, we must first be at peace ourselves. Then we will know the blessing of being children of one heavenly Father, brother and sister of each other, and be able to live in peace with each other.



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# Epiphanies and Sightings

James Torrens, S.J.

## Your Confessor Says

I breathe deep entering the box.  
How I hate the screen between us.

I have to strain to hear  
what so many voices drop.

When there's call to go deep,  
we have just three minutes.

What do I tell the spouses  
more sinned against than sinning?

How I'd like some tender words  
for young punchers and imps.

I just shake my head sometimes  
wondering what in the world.

But here's the real confession:  
I am buoyed by the spectacle.

Grace reaching into the brambles,  
the soul and its angel wrestling.

The brush with pure innocence  
and palpable friends of God.

I mustn't say the words lightly  
that cost a sweat of blood.

Oh, and it's not me forgiving,  
never forget that.

**O**n the feast of the Epiphany, Christians worldwide ponder sightings of the divine—starry appearances. In modern culture, the vocabulary of sightings, starry appearances, and epiphanies has taken on a separate life. We have Elvis sightings to look to as part of that fad for laying eyes on the most elusive of our icons. The local newspapers feed us rumored appearances of this or that celebrity or rock band, not known for always showing up. As to epiphanies, someone said recently on National Public Radio: "I just had my epiphany concerning fashion. It's not about style, it's about money."

James Joyce is generally credited with giving that twist to "epiphany." He spoke of "epiphany" in *Stephen Hero* as "a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech or of gesture or in a memorable phase of the mind itself." In her introduction to the Oxford World's Classics edition of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Jeri Johnson gives us this definition of a Joycean epiphany: "a moment in which the radiant whatness and full significance of a thing suddenly become apparent."

These days, if we want to discuss evidences of God, phenomena that show a "radiant whatness" of the divine, we have to use the language of experience. The question here is whether the ordinary believer, or the minister to an ordinary believer, is capable of such an experience—that is, can palpably experience God. Evangelical Protestants have claimed, ever since the Great Awakening two centuries ago, that our salvation depends upon a dramatic yes to that question. "Have you been saved?" means "Have you been swept up in an overwhelming conversion and feeling of God?"



What about the practicing Catholic, daily slogging along? Can he or she count on epiphanies—that is, on saving experiences? To put the matter another way, can we trust the heartfelt desire for validation of our faith, the longing for some unmistakable sign of God's acceptance of us? Shouldn't we repudiate that as self-pampering, as feeding emotionalism? Ronald Knox gave the matter careful attention in his classic study *Enthusiasm*. Here we can make do with the following prayer of a typically uncharismatic Englishman, Saint Thomas More: "Take from me, good Lord, this lukewarm fashion, or rather cold manner of meditation and this dullness in praying to you. And give me warmth, delight and life in thinking about you" (quoted in *The Catholic Prayer Book* by Monsignor Michael Buckley).

We can surely desire and beg—continually petition for—movements of the Holy Spirit in our lives. What we call "spiritual experience" amounts precisely to that. Saint Ignatius certainly thought we needed such movements; he prized the divine gift he had received of continual tears and consolations. In his advice to those who direct the Spiritual Exercises, he indicates that a sign of authenticity is that one's affectivity is not tranquil and flat but subject to ups and downs. Conflicted feelings, even instincts of repulsion, are grist for the mill and capital matter for discernment of spirits. The retreatant is urged to pray at various times for compunction, tears, gratitude, admiration, and intense joy with the risen Christ. In advising and promoting such prayer, Ignatius risked the rigors of the Inquisition, with its dim view of private illuminations, so convinced was he that spiritual progress lies this way.

Karl Rahner, in the wake of his founder Ignatius, taught that people in general have much more experience of God than they realize. "Experience of God is inescapable," Rahner wrote in a memorable essay, "The Experience of God Today" (*Theological Investigations XI*). What taxes us sorely and does not go without saying is the further stage of reflection upon, appreciation of, and acceptance of the experience. "The unrecognized experience of God," Rahner maintained, "is present, whether accepted or denied, even in those cases in which any discussion of it meets only with incomprehension." It is present in that tendency of our thought and desires beyond the matter at hand, that continuous stretching toward what cannot be comprehended or held in bounds, the infinite, sheer mystery.

Rahner writes that "an element of the ineffable manifests itself in the experience of everyday life." That was a bedrock philosophical persuasion of his. He resolutely maintained that the sacred and the so-called secular are interconnected and inseparable.

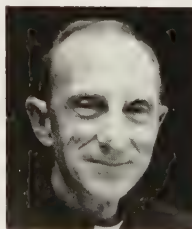
This powerful insight has wide implications. Normally, Rahner says, in our busyness, we let this experience go unexamined, but certain episodes bring it to light. He lists a number of such episodes: when we are reduced to aloneness and "the silence resounds penetratingly"; when we have to face up to our freedom and responsibility and guilt; when we do not have external support for something hard that we know we must do; when we receive and give unconditional love, needing outside support from "a reality which is no longer subject to our control"; when we have to accept the direct gaze of death upon us.

"This single basic experience of man, . . . that his existence is open to inconceivable mystery, . . . is present in a thousand different forms," Rahner argues. Joy, faithfulness, angst, fear of the glaring truth—these are some of the forms of God acting on us. Our unfortunate lack of attention draws from Rahner something very rare in his pages, a poetic expression, or metaphor, for our nearsightedness: "[We are] forever occupied with the grains of sand along the shore where we dwell at the edge of the infinite ocean of mystery." Still, he insists, "at the decisive moments of our lives, this experience breaks in upon our awareness once more with irresistible force."

Not long ago, a man came up to me as I was about to leave the confessional and asked for the sacrament. "It's been twenty-five years," he began. Talk about God breaking in! Talk about an epiphany, even for me! But such grace is at work daily. We find it active, certainly, in the ordinary examination of conscience, or the more ample examen of consciousness, and in receiving the sacraments.

God's visitations are much more frequent than we can easily credit. Recently I described a *New Yorker* cartoon to a Jesuit companion. God is on a cell phone in his room, saying to someone, "I'm afraid I can't, I have to be everywhere." My confrere replied, "People can more easily grasp that God is everywhere than that God is here now with me."

Yes, if Rahner is right that we are constantly experiencing God, we should have no trouble praying with Saint Thomas More for delight in the workings of God. Saint Ignatius would approve. When he encouraged us toward "finding God in all things," he did so in the framework of a prayer calculated to stir the heart. He called it "Contemplation for Obtaining Love."



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# Spiritual Growth Through Trauma

*Robert Grant, Ph.D.*

**T**raumatic experiences overwhelm abilities to cope and to make sense of events lying outside personal and collective frames of reference. They are traumata in large part because they throw into question or destroy understandings of self, other, life, and God. Victims wander in uncertainty until able to integrate the implications of their traumatic injuries into more comprehensive approaches to life.

Many victims of trauma find themselves in the unenviable position of holding life-truths that many have the luxury of denying. Social and therapeutic communities are often unable to validate the experience of trauma victims. Cultural denial and experiences of marginalization force many to minimize, distort, or repress their traumatic injuries in an attempt to reinstate pretraumatic understandings of reality. Failures to integrate the implications of traumatic experience result in a host of psychological and stress-related problems.

Most caregivers do not realize that something profound and spiritual often shifts in the core of victims as a result of their trauma. Wounding and displacement of the ego (the socially constructed aspect of self) can create access to the deeper self, or spiritual core, of individuals.

Most contemporary citizens define and know themselves primarily in terms of certain ego identifica-

tions (e.g., family of origin, ethnicity, personal accomplishments, power, status, looks, wealth). The ego is thus an amalgam of social conditioning and feedback from significant others. A wounded or deconstructed ego frequently thrusts victims into unfamiliar prepersonal and transpersonal landscapes that are typically experienced with confusion and feelings of inadequacy. Without preparation, guidance, and language, many are driven by these encounters to the brink of despair or madness because they often involve a loss of self and of consensual reality.

## THE CALL

Without a grounded sense of identity most live in terror of being engulfed by these unfamiliar realms. In his book *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell reminds us that "mystics and madmen swim in the same waters. One drowns and the other is reborn." Those with a sufficient degree of self are able to maintain a sense of personal integrity or coherence in the face of these deconstructive experiences.

Even the most courageous, especially when failing to receive support, flee back to collective frames of reference in an attempt to bury the implications of



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**Trauma is one of the few things powerful enough to place victims on a path that mystics, shamans, and mythic heroes have walked for thousands of years**

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their traumatic experience, which have often taken them beyond the boundaries of self and socially sanctioned reality. Biochemical solutions, fundamentalism, overemphasis on the intellect, and addiction can all be viewed as attempts to deny and regain control over aspects of life threatening to destroy former ways of containing reality.

Unfortunately, none of the aforementioned solutions can silence the Spirit's demand to acknowledge the vistas exposed by trauma, while at the same time surrendering old, and often uncritically accepted, frames of reference.

#### **TRAUMA AS INITIATION**

Trauma is a modern form of initiation. It is one of the few things powerful enough to place victims on a path that mystics, shamans, and mythic heroes have walked for thousands of years. Trauma is a contemporary way in which the Spirit attempts to break into consciousness. Trauma has always been a path to the Spirit. It was the catalyst for the conversion of many religious founders, saints, and mystics. Christ had a price on his head as a child, was a refugee, and was repeatedly betrayed by friends. People tried to kill him, and he was beaten, scourged, and crucified. Francis of Assisi was a war veteran and a prisoner, and he would have died in prison if his father had not been rich enough to pay his ransom. Ignatius of Loyola, a Spanish nobleman and warrior, was seriously wounded in war and would have died on the battlefield if he had

not been an aristocrat. He had a very long and uncertain convalescence, during which he completely reviewed his life and envisioned the Spiritual Exercises. John of the Cross was kidnapped, imprisoned, and tortured by his own Carmelite confreres. It was because of, not in spite of, the traumata experienced by these individuals that their social selves, or egos, underwent such a radical transformation.

Traditional spiritual practices rely heavily on discipline and the will. As a result, practitioners often lack the stamina to deal with the social isolation, the collapse of foundational beliefs, and the treacherous waters of the personal and collective unconscious that threaten to swamp any structure or system used to define self or reality.

Trauma has a dark staying power. Victims must incorporate the vistas exposed by their traumata or be overcome by them. Peace remains elusive unless victims follow the thread of their injuries all the way to the Spirit. Trauma is a dark grace that has the power to take victims toward healing and beyond.

#### **THE JOURNEY**

Most victims run like wounded beasts when first traumatized. Their hope is to get as far away from traumatic realities as possible. Repeated patterns of failure and victimization, along with various psychological disturbances, demonstrate that silencing the Spirit's call is not without cost.

Eventually, some realize that no form of distraction—be it the pursuit of wealth, professional acclaim, power, or pleasure—can shield them from the fact that they can be broken at any time. Security and certitude, then, are at best considered tenuous, at worst illusory.

Out of desperation, many seek something more. They acknowledge that their understandings of self, God, and world are inadequate. Having the bottom drop out of life pushes many in search of something deeper. Seeking relief, some venture into the unknown. Like travelers in a foreign land, they are without direction. They must ask strangers for guidance, limit the amount of baggage they carry, and circumvent a host of distractions and dangers in the hope of reaching a destination that is sensed but unknown. Many give up because of exhaustion, confusion, or fresh wounds acquired along the way. Some press onward through the kindness of others, the grace of God, or because not doing so would mean psychic and/or spiritual death.

Inspiration and nourishment are discovered in people, books, songs, and movies that offer desperately needed glimpses of meaningful truths. Such encounters feel serendipitous and synchronistic.

They provide enough nourishment to continue on, while simultaneously convincing victims that they are on the right track and not alone. Moving forward continues to strip them of what was once considered familiar and sacred. This part of the journey is excruciatingly painful. Much of what was previously considered beyond doubt now appears to lack substance. The evil and indifference of others is no longer denied. Much of what was once considered sacred now lies in ruins.

Most plead for an end to this process of deconstruction. Many spiritualize or try to numb their growing confusion and pain. Some recognize their suffering as an unwillingness to let go of partial constructions of reality while integrating awarenesses generated by their traumatic experiences. The Spirit is intolerant of partiality. Suffering and restlessness are the costs of refusing the Spirit's mandate to expand and embrace more of Creation (as revealed by experiences of trauma).

The imperfect elements of the victim's being are purged in the fire of suffering. Only a purified and humble heart is truly open to the influence of the Spirit. While the ego is being stripped, it is paradoxically becoming stronger. The more the implications of suffering are embraced, the more victims expand their capacity to hold life-truths that were once considered to be overwhelming.

Expanded consciousness takes in more of life. Capacities to relate and love must increase to the extent that victims become vessels of transcendence, capable of identifying with the distress of any living being.

Once the ego and its partial approaches have been reordered, deeper insights into life occur with increased frequency. Peak experiences and in- and out-of-body experiences, as well as visions, raptures, and wounds of love, are described by many on the healing path.

Behind the seeming chaos and flux of everyday existence, a sacred order begins to appear. Survivors long to linger in this realm of beauty and peace, especially after years of struggle. Unfortunately, their transformation is incomplete. Much still needs to be accomplished.

The evil within has yet to be faced. Many victims desire revenge and power, often in reaction to a growing sense of their inherent vulnerability. Many become terrified at their inability to protect themselves from a multitude of uncertainties that are part and parcel of life. Becoming comfortable with the inherent uncertainty and powerlessness of human existence enables some to discover a deeper meaning. Living from a stance of not knowing (in an ultimate sense), while resisting the temptation to exploit others, is a challenge every survivor must face.

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## Survivors are continually confronted with the choice to respond to their injuries with either hate or compassion

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Survivors are continually confronted with the choice to respond to their injuries with either hate or compassion. The first alternative considers others as objects, not as beings who unfold in relationship and whose sense of worth is increased or diminished by every human encounter. Those who choose hate harden their hearts. They see the world as a series of "dog-eat-dog" encounters.

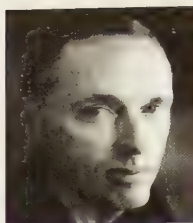
Some choose the compassionate response. Having walked the path of woundedness and learned the lessons of their wounds, they realize that nothing is guaranteed or secure. Compassion, in the difficult journey that is life, calls them to support and understand others. These individuals choose to love because violence is recognized as being rooted in the shame of being disconnected from others. Survivors love because it is their essence and because they know that nothing else has the power to heal or restore individuals to their full humanity.

Survivors embrace their inherent vulnerability. Living from this place connects them to all living beings. Regardless of race, creed, age, or gender, all beings have the potential to be broken. In this sense, they are all the same. Having suffered greatly and having been restored only by the care of God and others, survivors recognize that the ego's hungers for accumulation, achievement, and self-sufficiency are of little value. Authentic survivors live primarily from a self that knows that it is under the direction of a Power far greater than anything their rational consciousness can conceive.

Having walked the path of woundedness and having been restored by the compassion of others,



heroic survivors live primarily from the heart. They are moved by the distress and marginalization of others. Some survivors of the worst traumata become modern-day saints. They return to the world committed to sparing others the unnecessary loneliness and pain that so often accompany experiences of trauma.



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## Interfaith Understanding Crucial to Peace

In 1922 the American Baptist theologian Harry Emerson Fosdick (1878–1969) wrote the following: "From Sinai to Calvary—was ever a record of progressive revelation more plain or more convincing? The development begins with Jehovah disclosed in a thunderstorm on a desert mountain, and it ends with Christ saying: 'God is Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and truth'; it begins with a war-god leading his partisans to victory, and it ends with men saying, 'God is love; and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him'; it begins with a provincial deity loving his tribe and hating its enemies, and it ends with the God of the whole earth worshipped 'by a great multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation, and of all the tribes and peoples and tongues'; it begins with a God who commands the slaying of the Amalekites, 'both man and woman, infant and suckling', and it ends with a Father whose will it is that not 'one of these little ones should perish'; it begins with God's people standing afar off from his lightnings and praying that he might not speak to them lest they die, and it ends with men going into their inner chambers, and, having shut the door, praying to their Father in secret."

In 1927 the British Jewish theologian Claude Montefiore (1858–1938) agreed that such a list could be arranged, but so could this: "From the Old Testament to the New Testament—was there ever a record of retrogression more plain or more convincing? It begins with, 'Have I any pleasure at all in the death of him that di-

eth?'; it ends with 'Begone from me, ye doers of wickedness.' It begins with, 'The Lord is slow to anger and plenteous in mercy'; it ends with, 'Fear Him who is able to destroy both body and soul in Gehenna.' It begins with, 'I will dwell with him that is of a contrite spirit to revive him'; it ends with, 'Narrow is the way that leads to life, and few there be who find it.' It begins with, 'I will not contend for ever; I will not always be wroth'; it ends with, 'Depart, ye cursed, into the everlasting fire.' It begins with, 'Should I not have pity on Nineveh, that great city?'; it ends with, 'It will be more endurable for Sodom on the day of Judgement than for that town.' It begins with, 'The Lord is good to all who call upon him'; it ends with, 'Whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, there is no forgiveness whether in this world or the next.' It begins with, 'The Lord will wipe away tears from off all faces; he will destroy death for ever'; it ends with, 'They will throw them into the furnace of fire; there is the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.'" Montefiore concludes that his series is as misleading as Fosdick's.

The quotes from Fosdick and Montefiore are taken from an article in the London *Tablet* (25 January 2003) by Edward Kessler, director of the Centre for Jewish-Christian Relations in Cambridge, England. The point is that we can easily caricature another's religious position by taking texts out of context. Instead, we need to try to understand one another's beliefs about God. Otherwise, we will continue to foster stereotypes, and fear and hostility will continue to bedevil our interreligious relationships.

# Profiling Sexual Abusers

*Len Sperry, M.D., Ph.D.*

*Editor's note: All names and other details about individuals described in this article are fictitious, although they may resemble those of publicized offenders.*

**T**hree years after being ordained, Reverend William Graven became involved with a 31-year-old female parishioner who came to him for spiritual guidance after separation from her husband. Shortly afterward, his mother died. During his grieving, Father Graven became increasingly sad and lonely. The female parishioner offered to help him and soothe his loneliness. This led to caressing and, ultimately, to sexual intercourse. After a week, Father Graven's mounting guilt over violating his promise of celibacy led him to stop their sexual liaisons and end their "counseling" relationship. The woman quickly left the parish.

For years, he heard nothing from her or about her. Then he received a call from the chancellor, who said that a charge of sexual misconduct had been lodged against Father Graven with the district attorney and the diocese. In the twenty-year interim, he had served his various ministry assignments faithfully, was respected by his superiors, and had had no issues with either celibacy or chastity.

Reverend Gerald Eamons had been pastor at Holy Redeemer Parish for nearly twelve years when alle-

gations of sexual impropriety surfaced. The pastor had the reputation of being a "servant leader" to his congregation—one who always seemed ready to go the extra mile for any parishioner in need. His dedication, generosity, and competence were well known in the community but not sufficiently appreciated, in Eamons's estimation—which fueled his growing resentment of the parishioners' demands.

In the past five years he had had short sexual liaisons with four married women. With self-justifying entitlement, he began each relationship and found his self-esteem temporarily raised, but inner turmoil and anxiety mounted. This was relieved by stopping the current relationship. However, in a matter of six or seven months, his resentment would peak again, and he would seek out another sexual relationship.

Reverend Tomas Aguilera had become a shining light through his scholarly activity as a faculty member and chairperson in the history department at a small Catholic college. He worked tirelessly at advising students, mentoring junior faculty, and administering his department. He had no time for hobbies, family, friends, or his fellow priests. His work, however, was driven by shame and self-loathing, and the increasing sense of worthlessness he felt.

A year ago this feeling lifted when he fell in love with an 18-year-old male student he was advising. Though he rationalized that fondling, mutual masturbation, and oral sex were not illegal and did



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## Two factors appear to predispose priests and ministry personnel to engage in sexual misconduct: abusiveness and compulsivity

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not violate his celibacy, he nevertheless experienced considerable guilt. He became increasingly depressed, isolated, and obsessed with the sinfulness of his secret life. A similar experience with another male student had occurred two years previously.

Reverend Jeffrey Wisniewski stopped his car at an interstate rest stop for a cup of coffee during his return drive from completion of a residential treatment program for sexually-abusing clergy. A trucker “gave him the eye,” and within minutes the two were engaged in consensual sex in the extended cab of the truck.

Although Father Wisniewski had ostensibly been sent by his bishop for treatment of his ephebophilia, the treatment team soon learned that he also impulsively engaged in sexual behavior with adult men and women when he was frustrated and overstressed. Only a small number of his victims—probably three—were adolescent males.

Wisniewski had the reputation of being an excellent preacher and a creative, although somewhat unconventional, pastor. He gambled, dressed stylishly, drove fast, and had been arrested twice for driving under the influence.

He had held five parish assignments in a twelve-year period. Two of those assignments had ended after only a year because of concerns over misuse of parish funds in one instance and sexual impropriety in the other, which had led to the residential treatment.

Reverend Andy Sharff, the charming and charismatic pastoral minister at a diocesan high school, was placed on leave after allegations of sexual impropriety involving three male adolescents. His sex-

ual misconduct had begun soon after his mother's death. He became increasingly preoccupied with sexual desire and arousal and engaged in sexual encounters with several adolescents over a period of six or more years. While one of these relationships lasted at least four years, others were shorter-term relationships. Some of these occurred simultaneously, unbeknownst to the boys, who believed they were involved in a special, exclusive relationship with the priest.

At age 57, Reverend Adam Brown was convicted of sexually abusing a 10-year-old boy. He is alleged to have abused at least eighty other victims over a period of about twenty years during his active priestly ministry. The media noted that despite his superiors' awareness of the abuse, the former Father Brown was moved from assignment to assignment after parents of his alleged victims complained. Court documents indicate that Brown showed little concern for his victims and little, if any, remorse.

These cases exemplify various ways in which priests engage in sexual misconduct. Some of these ways seemed to garner more media attention than others. For example, both the number of children involved and the predatory quality of Brown's sexual exploits generated much more publicity than stories like that of Father Graven or Father Aguilara, probably because of cultural aversion to the sexual abuse of young children, particularly by those who hold positions of sacred trust. The abuse victims (or alleged victims, as they are typically called) are children and adolescents as well as adults.

Although the media focus primarily on pedophilia, or the sexual exploitation of children, the incidence of pedophilia in priests is quite low. On the other hand, the incidence of sexual relations between priests and adults (male or female) is considerably greater. The incidence of ephebophilia, or the sexual abuse of adolescents, is higher than that of pedophilia but considerably lower than that of priest sexual relations involving adults. Only recently have the media, religious leaders, and the general public begun to distinguish among these three forms of sexual activity.

Even though pedophilia has high visibility with significant psychological, legal, and financial consequences, religious leaders need to understand and comprehend the dynamics of the sexual involvement priests have with adolescents and adults as well as with children. Accordingly, this article provides a brief sketch of each of these three types of involvement. It also proposes a vulnerability model for understanding the internal factors involved in triggering and fostering misconduct, and a useful typology for recognizing different manifestations of misconduct.

## KEY TERMS

**Sexual abuse** is the invasion of any individual's sexual boundaries by someone who possesses emotional, physical, financial, or spiritual influence or power over that individual. Sexual abuse inevitably damages psychologically vulnerable individuals. Vulnerability is a condition in which there is a reduced capacity to face and resist invasion of one's boundaries. Sexual misconduct refers to a breach of professional relationship and involves any sexual action considered immoral or illegal. It involves any sexual abuse committed by a professional that violates an individual's boundaries. Thus, priests who engage in any sexual behavior that violates a parishioner's boundaries commit sexual misconduct.

Technically speaking, a priest who engages in sexual misconduct is a sexual offender. According to Curtis Bryant in *Bless Me Father for I Have Sinned* (edited by Thomas G. Plante), a sexual offender is an adult who has sexual contact with a minor for the purpose of being sexually aroused, or who has sexual contact with age-appropriate adults wherein the sexual advance is unwanted or out of control. Three forms of clergy sexual misconduct can be described.

**Pedophilia** involves sexual activity by adults with prepubescent children (age 13 or younger). It is estimated that less than 2 percent of priests have been sexually involved with prepubescent children.

**Ephebophilia** refers to the sexual attraction and arousal of adults to postpubescent or adolescent minors (arbitrarily designated as being between ages 14 and 17). It is estimated that about 4 to 5 percent of priests have been sexually involved with postpubescent minors.

**Adult sexual misconduct** refers to sexual advances and behaviors with age-appropriate males or females that are unwanted, compulsive, out of control, and/or involve boundary violations. Such behaviors include sexual harassment, sexual intercourse, fondling, physical force, fellatio or cunnilingus, and rape. At this time, there are no firm estimates of the incidence of such misconduct involving Catholic priests, but it is believed to be considerably higher than the incidences of pedophilia and ephebophilia.

## SEXUAL MISCONDUCT IN PRIESTS

Currently, there is no consensus on the causes of priest sexual misconduct. There is also very little research on clergy sexual misconduct, except for small and limited descriptive studies of the personality and

neurological attributes of offenders. Nor are there theories or derivations of theories that adequately explain such misconduct. Having no explanation of why certain priests seem more vulnerable or predisposed to sexual misconduct seriously limits the kind of research done on the topic and hinders both the treatment and prevention of sexual abuse.

The development of an explanatory model would in turn foster the development of typologies or profiles and the generation of research hypotheses that could be tested. In my thirty years of clinical experience working with priests and ministry personnel with sexual difficulties, I have noted two factors that appear to predispose such individuals to engage in sexual misconduct: abusiveness and compulsivity.

**Abusiveness.** Sexual misconduct is essentially an aggressive or abusive act. The establishment of an abusive relationship gives the offender power, control, and dominance over the victim and provides the offender with a connection, or "union," to a real person, which serves to reduce the offender's feelings of isolation and loneliness. Blanchard reports that the nature of clergy sexual misconduct closely resembles that of incest, and that issues of power, control, anger, and hostility—all manifestations of abusiveness—play a central role in clergy sexual misconduct.

Abusiveness involves a constellation of behaviors—physical, verbal, emotional, spiritual, and/or sexual—that characterizes the "abusive pattern." It should be noted that offenders are not abusive at all times and in all situations, but only in specific situations and circumstances that activate the pattern of abusiveness. Common to all forms of abuse is emotional abuse, which can serve as a proxy for physical and sexual abuse. For instance, an emotionally abusive gesture or comment may remind a sexually or physically abused individual that he or she can be sexually abused or beaten at any time.

Underlying the abusive pattern is the theme of dominance or power of subjugation. The abusive pattern reflects a preoccupation with control. Offenders typically become extraordinarily proficient in controlling how others think, feel, and act. While abusiveness is a key internal factor in explaining priest sexual misconduct, there are other internal and external factors. In short, abusiveness is a necessary condition of sexual misconduct, but not a sufficient explanation for the full range of such misconduct perpetrated by priests.

**Compulsivity.** Sexual compulsivity refers to the loss of ability to choose freely whether to stop or continue a sexual behavior. The behavior is continued despite



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## No single pattern characterizes all priests who engage in sexual impropriety or misconduct with children, adolescents, or adults

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adverse consequences or efforts to cease or reduce its frequency. Compulsive behavior is exacerbated and reinforced by accompanying obsessive thoughts. Compulsivity involving sex is sometimes referred to as sexual addiction, which has come to be defined as a pathological relationship that an individual develops to any form of sexual activity that has become unmanageable and that progressively worsens, usually resulting in negative consequences.

**Implications.** Assuming that sexual misconduct arises from both abusiveness and compulsivity allows us to speculate about the implications of this model.

First, there are various combinations of abusiveness and compulsivity. For example, one priest may exhibit more abusiveness than compulsivity, whereas another may exhibit equal amounts of both.

Second, various combinations of abusiveness and compulsivity affect victims differently. For instance, a priest with high levels of both abusiveness and compulsivity is more likely to engage in predatory forms of sexual misconduct than priests with other combinations of characteristic factors.

Third, it should be possible to establish a taxonomy of sexual misconduct based on different combinations of abusiveness and compulsivity.

### PROFILES OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

I have noted various patterns of abusiveness and compulsivity. For example, some priests seem to be

quite abusive and less compulsive, while others are more compulsive and less abusive. Six profiles reflect these varying patterns. This section provides a detailed characterization of each of these profiles, designated as Profiles I to VI.

The reader should note that each kind of sexual misconduct—that is, involving children (pedophilia), adolescents (ephebophilia), or adults—is possible for each profile. Thus, while predatory pedophilia may seem to be more commonly associated with Profile VI, other forms are possible. For instance, there could be multiple adolescent victims in predatory ephebophilia. In adult sexual misconduct—for example, in the form called Don Juanism—a priest may serially seduce several women (or men).

At least five factors characterize each profile: (1) personality and level of psychosexual development, (2) number of victims, (3) degree of planning, cunning, and intimidation, (4) extent of concern for the victim(s) and remorse, and (5) prognosis for change or rehabilitation.

**Profile I.** These priests tend to be naive and relatively healthy psychologically, or reasonably trained regarding sexual impropriety but somewhat neurotic. Despite their psychological health, priests who have little ministry experience or who have received limited pastoral training on sexual impropriety can have some difficulty recognizing appropriate boundaries and ethical standards involving power differentials with parishioners, particularly in responding to sexual involvement in somewhat ambiguous situations (e.g., when a teenager begins to relate in adult-adult interactions with a priest, or when an older female a priest is counseling says she dreams about him). When under considerable stress in such situations, the priest may become sexually or romantically involved. This occurs even though the priest believes that sexual behavior involving parishioners is unacceptable. There is usually a single victim, and the prognosis for change is reasonably good for these priests, unless they are characterologically naive—which, according to John Gonsiorek, editor of the book *Breach of Trust*, means too psychologically dense to deal effectively with the complex boundary issues confronting clergy.

The better-trained but somewhat neurotic priest can develop a sexual or romantic relationship with a vulnerable individual during a particularly stressful period in his life. Following a recent loss, such as the death of a parent, such a priest—who is likely to be depressed and lonely and to have limited support networks—may find a needy parishioner who can fill the emotional void he is experiencing. A common sequence is for the priest to make inappropriate self-

disclosures about his loss and loneliness, which lead to social interactions with a parishioner and then to sexual activity. Curiously, Glen Gabbard, writing in *Breach of Trust* (edited by John Gonsiorek), describes such individuals as being “love sick.”

This is one of the more common profiles of sexual misconduct, and the treatment prognosis tends to be good.

**Profile II.** Such priests tend to be hard-working and devoted ministers who have sacrificed their whole lives to the church. Often, they are in the middle or later stage of their careers. Over time, they experience mounting resentment and anger because they feel that insufficient appreciation has been shown by parishioners and the chancery for all their efforts. They also feel unappreciated, abandoned, inadequate, and increasingly socially isolated. As a result, they rationalize that life owes them something in return for their great efforts and sacrifices. Their self-justifying entitlement and rationalization “allow” them to violate sexual boundaries and engage in sexual misconduct. This impropriety is followed by intense feelings of guilt and shame, which are quelled by stopping the relationship and resolving to work harder. But this reaction is short-lived, as these priests eventually become resentful again and end up violating sexual boundaries once more. Because this pattern tends to recur every few years, there may be a number of victims. A variety of addictions may be noted in these individuals, including sexual addiction.

The treatment prognosis in these individuals tends to be guarded: although there is some possibility for major change, considerable effort is required to restructure their narcissistic and obsessive-compulsive style and their theology of ministry. Rehabilitation often requires a shift in ministry assignment away from settings in which these priests might bend boundaries (e.g., working with minors or adults).

**Profile III.** These priests, like those fitting Profile II, are somewhat narcissistic, as well as deeply invested in ministries that are often quite demanding. Unlike Profile II priests, however, they have come to believe that the measure of their self-worth is the degree to which they sacrifice themselves for others. Not only do they attempt to meet their personal needs for self-esteem in their work; they also derive their self-definition from their ministry. In addition, there is no balance in their lives, and little or no self-care, which includes developing hobbies, learning to relax, and fostering friendships and celibate intimacy. In combination, their obsessive-compulsivity, their burnout-prone theology of ministry, and their narcissistic entitlement are a recipe for disaster. This is particularly

noticeable during those times when they receive little recognition or validation from their parishioners, peers, and bishop or religious superiors. This lack of positive reinforcement results in marked feelings of worthlessness and shame, which become unbearable. The isolative style of these priests further compounds their loneliness and disconnection, and they may reflexively turn to sexual relations as a form of validation, as well as a means of assuaging their shame (typically, there are one or two victims). They tend to rationalize their actions, insisting that they truly love the parishioners and engage only in some sex acts but not in others, so as to be “technically” celibate.

Unfortunately, sexual liaisons are unlikely to provide the emotional supplies and feelings of control that these priests expect and demand. Accordingly, their isolation, desperation, and depression only increase. Masturbation may become problematic for them and further increase their sense of guilt and shame. In addition to their work addiction, they may abuse alcohol or other substances.

**Profile IV.** These priests tend to have ongoing issues regarding risk taking and impulse control. In addition to having problems with interpersonal boundaries, these individuals may engage in such behaviors as criminal activity (most notably speeding and use of illicit drugs), embezzlement, and sexual harassment. They come across to others as energetic and engaging, with a certain charm and creative touch. Like Profile II priests, these individuals have a narcissism marked by self-justifying entitlement. Their sexual conduct occurs both within and outside of the religious setting. Needless to say, they often engage in multiple sexual liaisons simultaneously. Despite their energy and creative ideas, they find it difficult to sustain and complete projects, which leads to dismay and consternation among both parishioners and superiors. Notably, unlike the priests fitting most of the other profiles, these priests exhibit little if any planning or cunning in their exploits. For individuals who fit this profile, the prognosis is guarded to poor.

**Profile V.** Priests characterized by this profile tend to be quite charming and even charismatic. They are also grandiose, often believing themselves to be better preachers, fundraisers, and administrators than their peers. Clever, skillful, and manipulative, they exhibit a high need for control and dominance and easily develop a loyal following of supporters who will fiercely defend them if charges of sexual misconduct surface. These priests have no qualms about bending rules and regulations to fit their needs and circumstances, particularly with regard to their sexual needs. Their victims—usually few in number—tend to be vulnerable,



dependent, and utterly loyal individuals. Treatment prognosis is poor to very poor.

**Profile VI.** This profile includes priests who are sexual predators, as well as those with severe psychotic disorders. Although the number of priests in this profile is perhaps the smallest, these individuals garner considerable media attention. They are the individuals who engage in repetitive sexual misconduct with minors (i.e., pedophilia and ephebophilia) as well as with adults. They typically use manipulation and intimidation with their victims, and sometimes inflict physical violence.

Priests fitting this profile are the most intentional and cunning in their exploitation. Those with severe psychotic disorders are particularly problematic because if their psychiatric condition remains untreated, or if they are not compliant with a prescribed treatment, they tend to “manage” their illness by acting out sexually. If they happen to be delusional, their sexual activity may border on the bizarre.

The prognosis for classic sexual predators is extremely poor. For those with severe psychiatric disorders, the prognosis depends on their compliance and responsiveness to treatment (which are often poor) and the extent to which ongoing monitoring is available.

## VARIATION CHARACTERIZES OFFENDERS

Let us now return to the cases that opened this chapter and review them in light of the theoretical model of the profiles of sexual misconduct. The case of Father Graven clearly represents Profile I, while the description of Father Eamons’s circumstances is characteristic of Profile II. Father Aguilera fits Profile III. Father Wisniewski illustrates one variant of Pro-

file IV, and Father Sharff represents Profile V reasonably well. Finally, Father Brown demonstrates the predatory abuse characteristic of Profile VI.

These cases serve to illustrate and underscore an important observation: that no single pattern characterizes all priests who engage in sexual impropriety or misconduct with children, adolescents, or adults. More specifically, priests who engage in pedophilic or ephebophilic behavior or who have sexual relations with adults could fit any of the six profiles.

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# Resistance in Spiritual Direction

*Merle Jordan, Ph.D., and Helen Cahill, O.S.U.*

*And the day came when the risk to remain closed in a bud became more painful than the risk it took to blossom.*  
(Anais Nin)

**H**ave you ever had a frustrating relationship with a directee, in which change and growth did not take place? As a spiritual companion, have you experienced a person who remained stuck in his or her patterns, went around the proverbial mulberry bush again and again, and, in spite of wide variety of helping approaches and suggestions, never seemed to make any progress in the development of his or her spiritual life? Have you been like some of us who have prayed fervently, reflected deeply, consulted freely, wrestled with our inadequacy, felt angry, and then experienced helplessness when there seemed to be no sign of change in the directee? If so, welcome to the ever-enlarging club of spiritual companions who feel powerless to effect the transformation of resistance in some directees.

Diane, a woman religious, had been in spiritual direction with various spiritual companions for years. She came to receive help in praying that she might be able to use her talents and gifts more creatively and productively in her ministry and in her personal and communal life. She reported that she tended to hit a ceiling of mediocrity in her performance and felt that

she was a failure in her religious profession and personal accomplishments. She felt discouraged and depressed because she had tried many routes to move beyond her stuckness, but to little or no avail. She had been on various retreats, read many spiritual guidance and self-help books, learned various forms of prayer, and gathered counsel from various mentors, counselors, spiritual directors, and friends, but without any substantial change. Apparently, she had left other spiritual companions and mentors frustrated in their attempts to help her. But her resistance always proved stronger than her desire to change. Her new director took the tack of inviting Diane to consider exploring and experiencing her previously unconscious purposefulness and the meaning of her needing not to achieve her potential and to be a failure. This approach is derived from the psychological work of Bruce Ecker and Laurel Hulley, who believe that people have a passionate purpose and profound meaning behind their resistance to change. Usually, the cost of the emotional and spiritual suffering of remaining the same is less painful than the suffering that the consciously desired change conceivably would bring. As Diane moved from a self-critical, antisymptom approach regarding her problem of mediocrity to a prosymptom perspective of trying to experience the meaning of her failing to accomplish her goals and expectations, she came to a radical awareness that had consciously escaped her for years.



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Diane had a younger brother whom she loved dearly. But he was mentally challenged in numerous ways and as a result did not have the usual opportunities for success in school, sports, and friendships. Diane had always felt guilty that she was blessed with beauty, brains, popularity, and friends, in sharp contrast to her brother. Her spiritual director asked her to try a sentence completion task. Diane was to finish the phrase "It is important for me not to succeed because. . . ." Diane ended the sentence with the following phrases: "I don't want to hurt my brother's feelings"; "I love my brother so much I don't want him to feel terrible because of my success"; and "I would be so guilty." In order to show her love to her brother and not hurt him or feel guilty about surpassing him, she had put a low ceiling on her performance and erected barriers to success in various activities.

While she felt that she was a failure in life, the covert emotional and spiritual truth was that her love for her brother won out in her brilliant childhood strategy of taking care of him and protecting him by severely limiting her own accomplishments and achievements. For her, not to hide her light under a bushel was to fail her brother, and thus her effective performance would have been a more costly and painful suffering to her because she believed that it would cause serious emotional damage to her brother. When she finally understood the reasons for her lifelong pattern of being an underachiever, Diane

was able to understand why her years of prayer to be freed up to perform constructively at her full potential had been of no avail: loving and protecting her brother by apparently failing and losing were really her ways of succeeding and winning. In her spiritual direction process, Diane learned to pray for help in loving and caring for her brother while at the same time freely using her own gifts and talents.

The aim of a prosymptom position is to help the directee experience (and not just understand cognitively) the passionate purpose in the stuckness and the resistance to change. If the directee can experience, embrace, and name the meaning and purpose of the resistance, then he or she is liable to find the freedom to choose another path or alternative. If this approach were put in the perspective of prayer, it might read as follows:

Give me the courage to explore, to experience and to bear the hidden anxiety and suffering that lie beneath the symptoms and the problem with which I am struggling. Help me not to condemn myself for my stuckness, my repetitive patterns, and my resistance to change. Help me to embrace the purpose of my stuckness and my resistance, so that with your support, I may become free to choose another way and a different solution. Amen.

The desert monastics had a saying that frames the context for the companion in such a resistant situation: "It is easier to ride a camel in the direction that it is already going." Applied to spiritual companioning using a prosymptom approach, this means that the companion does not try to help the directee grow and become different; rather, the companion invites the directee to experience the meaning of being just as he or she is—symptoms, problems, stuckness, and all.

Blaine, a middle-aged pastor, came for spiritual direction to grow closer to God and to deepen his connection to God. Blaine criticized himself harshly for not being more disciplined in his spiritual life so that he could experience union with the Divine.

In an attempt to understand the purpose of Blaine's staying at arm's length from God while consciously yearning to be close, his spiritual companion invited him to visualize a scene in which he was beyond his struggles and deeply experiencing the presence of God in his life and a sense of union with God's love. With some difficulty, Blaine went into that visualization, and the companion asked him if there was any downside or discomfort to the experience of such closeness. After a pause, Blaine noted that he was aware of some anxiety. He described it as a fear that intimacy with God would take away his freedom, autonomy, and independence. In reflecting on where in his human relationships he had experienced close-

ness taking away his freedom, Blaine commented, "I'm afraid that I will be a passive wimp and give up my identity and integrity, just like I did with my mother, who was easily hurt and upset and then defensive and controlling." As Blaine began to differentiate his image of God from his mother, he could perceive and experience God as loving but not controlling. Thus, over time, Blaine moved beyond his terror of losing his freedom if he related closely to God. He also saw that his prior pattern of keeping God at arm's length was his protection against losing his own uniqueness and freedom in a relationship of love. In other words, he had protected himself from losing his freedom in intimacy by his solution (which he had always consciously deemed the problem) of keeping God at arm's length.

In this approach to dealing with resistance, the spiritual companion operates on the assumption that the directee has unconscious reasons, meanings, and strategies for being the way he or she is. The companion invites, facilitates, and enables the directee to uncover the emotional and spiritual truths about, and meanings of, his or her persistence in remaining as he or she is.

The spiritual companion may wish at times to focus particularly on the unconscious plan, strategy, or solution used by a directee to keep life just as it is. Diane's plan was to be mediocre or to fail in order to protect her brother. Blaine's strategy was to protect himself from losing his identity in fusion by keeping his distance from God. Often, these plans are disguised "defensive strategies of salvation"—solutions, through self-crucifixion and self-atonement, to save oneself in a world perceived as threatening. These plans are idolatrous in the sense that the individual usurps the role of Christ as Savior, but generally the person's anxiety and lack of trust in others have been so great that he or she cannot rely on anyone else, not even the Divine, for deliverance and salvation. "I'd rather do it myself and save myself" is the unconscious mantra of such persons as they strive unknowingly to protect themselves from retraumatization and to avoid recreating the overwhelming feelings from past betrayals, disloyalties, abuse, neglect, or rejection.

Let us look at two more brief examples of unconscious plans that cause directees emotional and spiritual suffering but also protect them from a more costly suffering they are unaware of trying to avoid.

One brilliant and creative professional woman did not understand why she regularly had life-threatening illnesses. She believed that they had a psychospiritual meaning, but she couldn't grasp why she got ill with such regularity. Her spiritual companion invited her to experience what she would lose if she

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gave up being ill. She had a powerful insight: as a child of a single parent, she felt that she could never get her mother's attention, empathy, and love unless she became sick. Consequently, her unconscious plan that continued into adulthood was to cope with tension and stress by getting sick in order to obtain tender loving care. When she attained an awareness of her self-crucifying strategy of seeking love through illness, she became free to find love in much healthier ways.

A woman in her thirties sought spiritual direction for help with her depression and inability to hold on to a job. A variety of caregivers had tried to get her over her depression and help her stick with a job, to little or no avail. As the spiritual companion sought to help the woman experience her strategy for remaining depressed and unemployed, the directee began to realize that the only strategy she knew for protesting the terrible neglect and emotional abuse to which she had been subjected by her parents was to fail and not be happy. She discovered that she had unknowingly felt that there was no other way to communicate to the world the depth of the childhood injustices inflicted upon her. While she knew it would be natural for a companion to try to help her move into a positive spiritual realm in which she could be creative, productive, and joyous, that was the very threat she had to guard against. Only when she was finally able to experience her deep dilemma, through the realization that she had unconsciously felt compelled to mess up her life to protest the childhood injustice, did she come to the freedom to understand that she could take in God's love and advocacy and



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## The spiritual companion needs to be empathically attuned to the spiritual and emotional meanings and beliefs that cause the directee to maintain patterns of resistance to change

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move ahead, and that her spiritual companion and God empathized with her suffering without her having to sabotage herself. As she slowly gained a sense of fulfillment, both in a job and in a love relationship, she realized that she could name and protest her childhood abuse and neglect by means other than self-destruction.

In addressing directees' resistance, it is important that we keep in mind the advice of Paul Dell, a family therapist. He suggests that many caregivers mistakenly try to break the "lock" of resistance rather than look for a different or more helpful "key." The spiritual companion needs to be empathically attuned to the spiritual and emotional meanings and beliefs that cause the directee to maintain patterns of resistance to change.

We need to be aware that many factors can block us from meaningfully mirroring the passionate purposes of a directee's resistance and symptoms. For example, some of us have not been trained to help our directees embrace and experience the truths and purposes of their resistance. Some of us take pride in our

ability to interpret cognitively what is going on and to make insightful comments or suggestions for growth and change. A few of us have what Francois Fenelon described as "the pleasure of loving unselfishly," which may become the messianic helping stance for those of us who grew up as parentified children. Spiritual companions who have difficulty finding the key to the directee's lock of resistance may find it helpful to explore their own reasons for having trouble embracing the meanings of a directee's resistance to change.

Finally, we hope that the directee will become free enough from the past beliefs and meanings that were both protective and self-sabotaging to have the grace to say this prayer from *Let Yourself Be Loved* by Phillip Bennett: "Teach me to love myself, to respect my infinite preciousness, for in loving myself, I honor you. In venerating your sacred presence within me, I venerate your presence in all things."

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# Befriend Your Octopus

*Mary C. Gurley, O.S.F., Ed.D.*

**I**t's been over a dozen years now since my article entitled "The Octopus in Me Died Last Year" appeared in *HUMAN DEVELOPMENT* (Fall 1989). In that article, I attempted to describe my conversion from a hectic round of numerous and overlapping responsibilities and tasks (i.e., my octopus) to a more leisurely pace of activity that resulted in my living a far richer life. A number of things have happened as a result of that article. For one thing, the article prompted a flurry of mail indicating that many identified with and shared my octopus ways. For another, the public exposé of the fact that my life had been out of balance prompted my friends, then and to this day, to keep a check on me and help me avoid a return to my octopus ways. Indeed, thanks to them, I now possess a small but treasured collection of octopus curios that serve as silent reminders. Perhaps the most important outcome of writing the article, however, was that I acquired a consciousness that it is my responsibility to choose the pace at which I live.

Today—alas, despite my public declaration and the years of careful monitoring by my friends and by me—I've returned to the public forum to retract the octopus obituary. You see, the octopus in me hadn't really died; it had simply gone into remission. And now, with the octopus once again working at nearly full strength, I'm back with both the bad news and the

good news about octopi. Bad news: Folks like me, who tend to live an octopus life, cannot actually kill their octopus. Good news: It's possible to befriend your octopus. This article describes the eight (naturally) things that I'm trying to do to make friends with my own octopus. Perhaps you may also find them helpful.

## **NAME YOUR OCTOPUS**

Our name is integral to our identity. We all want our name spelled and pronounced correctly; we look for it on lists; we don't like being teased about it. To know another's name is to be able to enter into conversation with that other, and to remember another's name is the first step in forming a relationship with the other. Even from our youngest days, we presented ourselves to the world by announcing our name. If we didn't wish to communicate with the person who was asking our name, we simply played shy and refused to give it away—our childish way of establishing control over who we are. So tied up is our name with our identity that it is not uncommon for young adolescents, struggling with who they are, to modify or change completely their given name. Some Native American peoples hold fast to the custom and courtesy of never directly asking another his or her name;



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## **An out-of-control octopus is a liability; a lean, trim, focused octopus has the potential to become a trusted partner**

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such a breach of etiquette is considered tantamount to taking away something of that person's spirit.

Psychologists tell us that it is important to name our fears, as a first step toward confronting and eventually overcoming them. I suggest that we name our individual octopus and acknowledge that it is a part of who we are and how we work. Giving our octopus a name and bringing it to a greater level of consciousness might well lead us into a healthy dialogue with that too-busy part of our life. We may even learn that we rather like the octopus as the piece of us that keeps us on our toes. Or we may want to converse about who's in charge of our joint operation—the octopus or I. Whatever the exchange, I suggest that the octopus be addressed by name and with the dignity that this part of us needs.

### **DANCE WITH YOUR OCTOPUS**

Gracefulness in dancing doesn't come easily. It takes practice and discipline. We need to learn the steps, be coordinated enough to keep time with the rhythm of the music, match our moves to those of our partner. But once one learns how to dance—oh, the joy of sharing the experience!

We must, I submit, invite our octopus into the dance of our lives. This begins with a courteous bow of acknowledgment that the octopus and I are lifelong partners. Then, right from the beginning, we need to be clear about which of us will be the leader and at what tempo we will dance. We need to understand and negotiate our skills and preferences. For example, how long can we fast-dance and still remain

graceful; can we learn how to enjoy the gentleness of the slow dance; are we comfortable just watching others on the dance floor while we sit out a few dances to catch our breath? A further question to negotiate with our octopus: To whose music do we dance? To whose music do we wish to dance?

As any dancer has experienced, the ultimate proof that we have learned to dance with a partner is when our movements are so coordinated that awkwardness has disappeared and we move as one with our partner. So must it be with our octopus partner; we must dance together with grace.

### **KEEP OCTOPUS ON BALANCED DIET**

A healthy octopus is not indulged and gets plenty of rest. A healthy octopus understands that it need not be present at every event but can spring into action at the appropriate times. It knows its place as one of service and doesn't overstep its bounds. None of this is natural behavior for an octopus and so must be learned, even as old octopus ways are unlearned. Obviously, this requires considerable discipline—a trait not often seen in the modern-day octopus.

As with all diets, the first step in changing indulgent behavior is to recognize it as such. Thus, we must keep a careful record in order to understand where and how the octopus is overreaching, and we must take steps to slim down octopus responsibilities. This may be a slow process of observing one's octopus, testing various patterns of behavior, and choosing a balance that works. The motivation for such an effort is the recognition that an out-of-control octopus is a liability; a lean, trim, focused octopus has the potential to become a trusted partner.

### **LET YOUR OCTOPUS SWIM**

I have a friend who takes her dog to the kennel simply to give the dog a rest from her. As in any relationship, she tells me, she and the dog sometimes get on each other's nerves and snap at one another. What does she do while the dog is in the kennel? Perhaps it is better to ask, what doesn't she do? Answer: She doesn't feed, walk, clean up after, or play with the dog. As a result, she spends the whole day, or a luxurious weekend, responsibility-free.

We who live with an octopus would do well to learn from my friend and treat our octopus—and ourselves—to some time apart from one another. Giving our octopus time out to swim freely in the pool now and then, we too can begin to revel in responsibility-free luxury time. We can do inconsequential things, spend some time playing, daydream, or watch the grass grow. A consistent habit of taking these mini-

vacations could go a long way toward untangling the knots of octopus living. It also refreshes the octopus.

## **BRING OCTOPUS TO VISIT YOUR FRIENDS**

One of the real problems with living with an octopus is that we get used to it and don't recognize the multiple ways in which it can be eating at the edges of our lives. This is similar to how our appearance can change so subtly over time that we don't notice it. Visit a friend, however, and within a very short space of time, you have been analyzed and a determination has been made: you look great, or you look tired, or you're gaining weight, or whatever. With trusted friends, we accept the critique as a welcome and objective mirror on ourselves and move easily into conversations about our lives. These are just the friends to whom we should introduce our octopus. A formal introduction and an invitation to our friends to talk with our octopus can go a long way toward helping us keep the octopus in right relationship. A trusted friend will tell us—when we can't see it ourselves—that we're getting cranky, or sitting on the sidelines of life, or overworking our octopus.

## **TEACH OCTOPUS ABOUT LIMITS**

This is a difficult practice, because folks with an octopus have a tough time setting work limits for themselves, never mind for their octopus. In fact, they often don't recognize work limits at all. This is particularly true for persons who are in the helping professions and who have borrowed the bumper-sticker mantra as their own: "So many [you fill in the blank], so little time."

But we're each of us responsible for the behavior of our octopus. Just as a parent who has never taken the time to teach a child manners cannot discipline that

child for being obstreperous, neither can we blame our octopus for driving us to exhaustion if we haven't marked boundaries. We absolutely need to set reasonable parameters for our work. This may mean that some responsibilities need to be delegated to others, some jobs may need to be moved to the "tomorrow" pile, and some requests to take on new projects may need to be refused. To conduct such an inventory may well require some dialogue with self, with superiors, or with a trusted friend who knows your octopus.

## **TAKE OCTOPUS TO CHURCH**

Church—or prayer, if you prefer—is the place and time in which we can be most ourselves. In dialogue with God, we can be our true selves. It is here that we learn "Who are you, O God, and who am I?" If the octopus is part of who I am, then the octopus belongs in my prayer. In the light of God's grace, we open ourselves, our whole selves, to be fashioned in God's image and likeness. This includes the octopus—the part of us that drives us to work long and hard for the coming of the Kingdom. Not to include the octopus, not to open that part of myself to God's love, is to hide and deny a piece of who I am.

## **LOVE OCTOPUS FOR WHO IT IS**

It is YOU. Befriend your octopus with great joy.



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# BOOK REVIEW

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*Praying Through Our Lifetraps: A Psycho-spiritual Path to Freedom* by John J. Cecero, S.J. Totowa, New Jersey: Resurrection Press, 2002. 126 pages. \$9.95.

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Cecero represents the next generation of “integrationists,” like giants Robert J. Wicks and Margaret Z. Kornfeld, who seek to marry the traditions of psychology and spirituality in a union that yields healing and wholeness. Clinician, professor, and author Cecero links Jeffrey E. Young’s schema therapy (ST), as presented in the latter’s *Cognitive Therapy for Personality Disorders: A Schema-Focused Therapy Approach* (1999), with various spiritual practices of the Christian tradition, most notably the reading-meditation-prayer-contemplation cycle (*lectio-meditatio-oratio-contemplatio*, articulated by Guigo the Carthusian a millennium ago.) This “marriage” provides seven concrete questionnaires for identifying one’s lifetraps, as well as an ST analysis of the causes and treatments of the traps through the use of personal reflective exercises, prayer modes, and guidance from a counselor or spiritual director.

Young defines lifetraps as “early maladaptive schemas.” These broad, pervasive themes, comprising memories, cognitions, emotions, and bodily sensations, are developed during childhood or adolescence and elaborated upon throughout one’s lifetime—making them resistant to change, and leading the life-trapped person to experience significant emotional distress and marked difficulties with interpersonal functioning. Cecero deals with seven common lifetraps: abandonment, emotional deprivation, mistrust and abuse, dependence, entitlement, subjugation, and unrelenting standards. The reader is invited to determine whether he or she is caught in these traps, and then to use cognitive therapy with spirituality to escape from them.

I answered the questionnaires and found that Cecero’s treatment of two of the lifetraps gave me new ways of thinking about several old issues, and also provided some imaginative prayer exercises to

enhance cooperation with God’s ongoing healing efforts. Thus, I can attest not only to the intellectual depth of the book but also to its positive practical application in my own life struggles. I believe that many readers will find Cecero’s insights and exercises helpful.

Cecero details how each of the four movements in prayer corresponds to the four major components of therapeutic change. *Lectio* can support cognitive change; *meditatio* can strengthen experiential change; *oratio* accompanies interpersonal change; and *contemplatio* deepens behavioral change. To be praised is Cecero’s lavish use of the imagination in outlining each of the many suggested spiritual interventions. For example, he helps the lifetrapped alter their image of God as punitive or cold. Beyond the four main methods treated, however, Cecero also weaves in other practices, including centering prayer, as developed by John Keating.

I have only a few criticisms of this book. First, several authors cited in the text do not appear on the reference pages, including Abraham Maslow and Ignatius of Loyola (the latter omission is odd for a Jesuit author).

Second, only feminine pronouns are used whenever a professional is described in this book. Having spent several decades demanding that my students use inclusive language in their writing, I find it disconcerting that Cecero has chosen not to include masculine pronouns occasionally.

Finally, in the last three chapters of the book, Cecero helps readers discern what extra therapeutic help they might need beyond doing the exercises and praying the prayers of his text—for example, counseling, spiritual direction, spiritual reading. He mentions psychologists, clinical social workers, and psychiatrists, but he omits any reference to pastoral counselors—the professionals most consciously dedicated to just the sort of integration Cecero is doing.

Blemishes aside, however, this book can be recommended as a course text for interns in counseling, clinical psychology, or spiritual direction training, as an important addition to the library shelves of experienced practitioners and teachers, and, most of all, as a companion for adults seeking freedom and healing from their lifetraps.

—William J. Sneek, S.J., Ph.D.



# Invitation to Authors

**T**he principal intention of our editorial staff and board in publishing HUMAN DEVELOPMENT is to be of help to people involved in the work of fostering the growth of others. This growth, which is as important for the well-being of society as it is for that of individuals, cannot be achieved apart from beneficial interaction among persons; nor can it be accomplished without the grace of the Creator, who wants us all to live our lives as maturely as possible and who is glorified by our doing so. The articles we publish are written to contribute to the promotion of such constructive interaction among persons, and between them and God.

The intellectual, emotional, spiritual, moral, physical, sexual, and cultural aspects of human development are all of deep concern to us. It is our hope that writers who desire to contribute to the ministry this journal represents will feel encouraged to deal with any of these areas of growth, keeping in mind the fact that our readers include church leaders, pastoral ministers, educators, religious superiors, spiritual directors, athletic coaches, religious formation personnel, campus ministers, missionaries, people performing healing ministries, parents, women and men engaged in lay ministry, and other people of various religious denominations who have in their care persons of all ages whom they want to help develop to the fullest degree of maturity, happiness, and human effectiveness.

We want the articles we publish to be of interest to as many of these readers as possible. We want the content of the articles to shed theoretical light on the various aspects of human development. We also desire to provide as many how-to articles as we can, in which the authors describe for our readers what they have learned from both their successful and their unsuccessful attempts to nourish the growth of others. We are especially interested in presenting articles that discuss the ways that development-related issues and problems are handled and ministries are performed in diverse cultural settings around the world. We want to receive reviews of books and films; reports on research, workshops, symposia, and courses; interviews; and letters to our editor.

In brief, we publish HUMAN DEVELOPMENT so that people wishing to become fully alive and to help others do the same can benefit from the knowledge and experience of writers at home in such fields as theology, psychology, medicine, psychiatry, sociology, spirituality, education, and organizational development—writers who realize the importance of sharing their expertise with appreciative readers in 150 different countries, and who are generous enough to take the time to put their ideas on paper so that human beings can become what we are created to be: persons being made whole in the image and likeness of God.

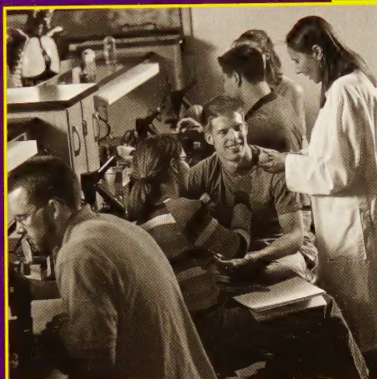
Linda D. Amadeo, R.N., M.S.  
Executive Editor





# Regis University

1877



Since 1877, Regis University has been educating men and women of all ages to take leadership roles and to make a positive impact in a changing society. Standing within the Catholic and United States traditions, the University is inspired by the particular Jesuit vision of Ignatius Loyola, a vision that challenges us to attain the inner freedom to make intelligent choices.

Through innovative programs centered in academic excellence and a commitment to the individual student, fostered through the heritage of values-centered Jesuit education, Regis University meets the needs of more than 15,000 students. Regis University is comprised of three schools: Regis College, School for Professional Studies, and School for Health Care Professions.



Regis College offers liberal arts and undergraduate professional degree programs for young adults in a traditional campus setting. The college provides special challenges through an honors core, leadership-training programs, and service education opportunities. Four interdisciplinary core seminars anchor the basic studies component. Sports at Regis College emphasize athletes as students. The college also offers a Master of Arts in Education: Learning and Teaching.

The School for Professional Studies (SPS) offers both undergraduate and graduate degree programs for adult students in classroom-based, guided independent study and online settings. Utilizing its own talents and resources, plus strategic partnerships that include Bisk Publishing and Sun Microsystems, SPS has become the largest provider of online adult education among the world's Jesuit colleges and universities. The school is also a leader in accelerated learning research.

The School for Health Care Professions (SHCP) provides values-based health care education. Besides the traditional nursing program, the school offers RN-to-BSN degree completion work, an accelerated nursing option for people with an earned baccalaureate degree, a nurse practitioner program, a Health Services Administration and Management program, a Master of Science program in nursing, and a Doctor of Physical Therapy degree. Online course work is also possible in certain programs.

